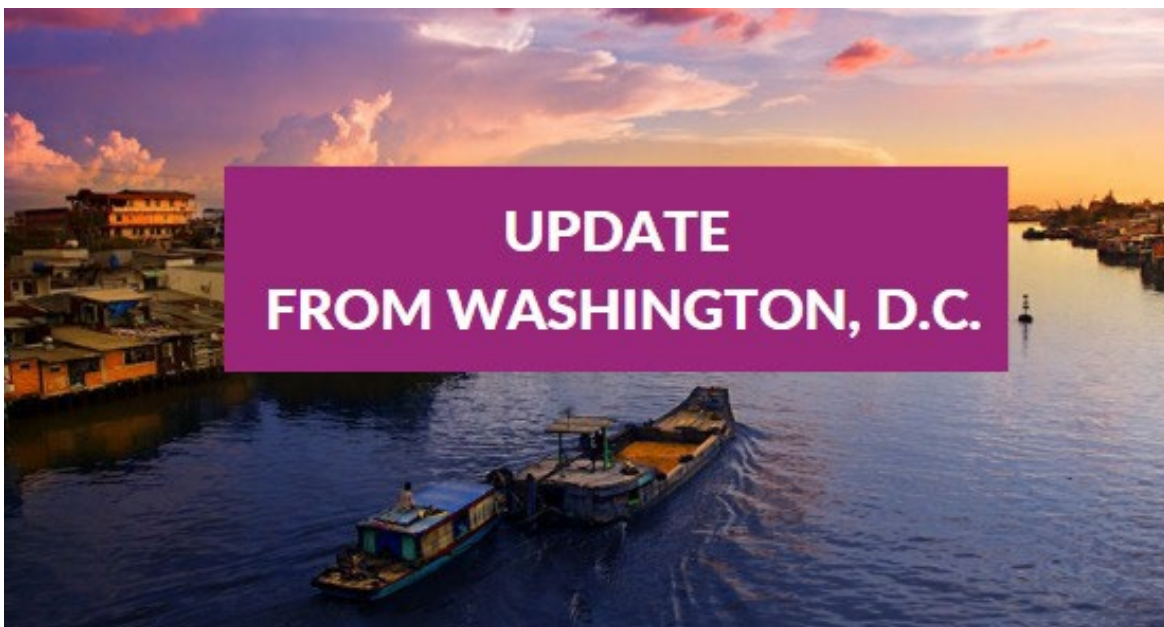




## The Asia Foundation



Welcome to The Asia Foundation's Washington, D.C. April newsletter. This issue features updates about our recent roundtable on **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Updates from Asia and the Pacific** and **Women's Roles in Peacebuilding: The Power of Women Leading Peace in Mindanao**, featuring the Bangsamoro Women's Movement in the Philippines; an InAsia blog post and podcast episode about **climate change and overlapping vulnerabilities in Bangladesh**, as well as recent publications on **digital trade agreements, strengthening the care economy, international peace support and effective peacebuilding in Myanmar**, and **securing legal recognition for the rights of persons with disabilities in Indonesia**.

## Recent Events

[Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Updates from Asia and the Pacific](#)



**April 10** – Gender inequality in Asia and the Pacific is compounded by the current climate and environment crises, the lingering socio-economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the ever-evolving technology landscape in the region. Jane Sloane, Senior Director of the Foundation’s Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality program, provided an overview of the current challenges facing women and girls in Asia and the Pacific, while focusing on the Foundation’s work to address [the gendered impacts of climate change](#) and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Learn more about the Foundation’s [Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality](#) program.

[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. In the Philippines, the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro to end nearly four decades of intermittent violent civil conflict in Mindanao. A strong movement of Bangsamoro women played a crucial role in leading efforts to secure peace in Mindanao, and they have continued playing a vital role in the formation of the new Bangsamoro Constitution, Parliament, and government. The Asia Foundation supported these efforts during the peace process and is now supporting sustainable economic development and strategies to strengthen social cohesion and sustain peace in the region. This panel featured Dr. Jennifer Hawkins, Acting Division Chief, Women, Peace, and Security, Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues, U.S. Department of State and key Bangsamoro women leaders, Chairperson Bainon Karon and Atty. Sha Elijah Dumama-Alba, reflecting on their role in advancing peace, justice, and prosperity in Mindanao. Learn more about the Foundation’s work in the [Philippines](#).

On April 25, the Bangsamoro Women’s Movement is being honored at the [Lotus Leadership Awards Gala](#) in New York, for their groundbreaking contributions to the Mindanao peace process. The gala is hosted by the Asia Foundation’s [Lotus Circle](#), a

vibrant community of committed individuals and organizations supporting the Women's Empowerment program to strengthen economic, social, and political rights and opportunities for women and girls in Asia.

## Voices from the Field



### [Hearing Local Voices at "Ground Zero" of Climate Change](#)

[Bangladesh](#) is facing a climate emergency. Although it is one of the world's least polluting nations, it is already experiencing some of the most severe effects of changing weather patterns, including seasonal flooding, erosion, and salinity intrusion, all of which can be catastrophic for local communities and their livelihoods. The Asia Foundation is working in partnership with the Centre for Peace & Justice of BRAC University in Bangladesh to develop a framework for assessing how existing drivers of fragility interact with the onset of climate change, in order to answer the question of how climate adaptation strategies reflect and respond to broader social and political fragilities. This [InAsia](#) blog and podcast provide an overview of the findings from the initial scoping study of the project, as well as examples of the human impacts of climate disruption where the social compact is precarious. Learn more about the Foundation's [Environment and Climate Action](#) program.

## Recent Publications



The Asia Foundation

## STRENGTHENING CARE ECONOMIES in Asia and the Pacific

Women's equal access to economic opportunities is imperative for future growth and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific. The participation of women in the labor force is also critical to women's advancement and achieving gender equality in the region. This is true for low, middle, and high-income countries.

For example, in India, including just 50 percent of non-working professional women in the economy would add \$440 billion (about \$1,400 per person in the US) USD to India's GDP. Getting women into the workforce is a key priority. However, research has shown that one critical barrier for women to enter the labor force is the **double burden of care and household responsibilities that disproportionately fall on women**. This burden is particularly acute in Asia.

To advance women's economic security and opportunities, there is an urgent need to establish a robust care economy ecosystem that redistributes the burden of care through effective care policies and investments in promising care delivery systems. This focus will also contribute to providing those in need of care with genuine options and choice. Understanding the state of care in each country is crucial to inform care policies, delivery and justice, however current data is very limited. Only 21 out of 58 countries in Asia and the Pacific have one data point to measure unpaid care.

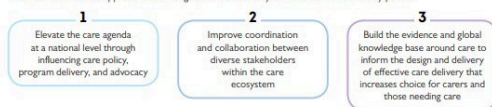
Moreover, policymaking on care is difficult because:

1. The right policy **differs not just by country**, but even within different municipalities within one country
2. The focus on the care economy is so nascent that there are **no ready-made large-scale interventions** that governments can adapt, and
3. There is **little coordination** on care policies, delivery and justice within governments.

When there is a focus on care as an issue, it sits across multiple government functions including gender, labor, health, social protection, education, with little coordination among agencies.

### Our Approach

The Asia Foundation's approach to building resilient care ecosystems centers on three key pillars:



### Pillar 1: Elevate the care economy nationally

In **Thailand**, the Foundation is working to increase access to childcare, recognizing the critical role that affordable and accessible childcare services play in enabling women's labor force participation, as workers, leaders, and entrepreneurs. Recognizing the gap in government-provided childcare for children aged six months to two years, the Foundation has engaged with the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to support the expansion of childcare service provision. This includes promoting policies that strengthen the capacity of childcare centers to deliver high-quality services. Through recent partnerships, the Foundation is also coordinating with Yunus Thailand and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to develop and strengthen private sector-led affordable, accessible, and high-quality childcare options.

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## DIGITAL TRADE AGREEMENTS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

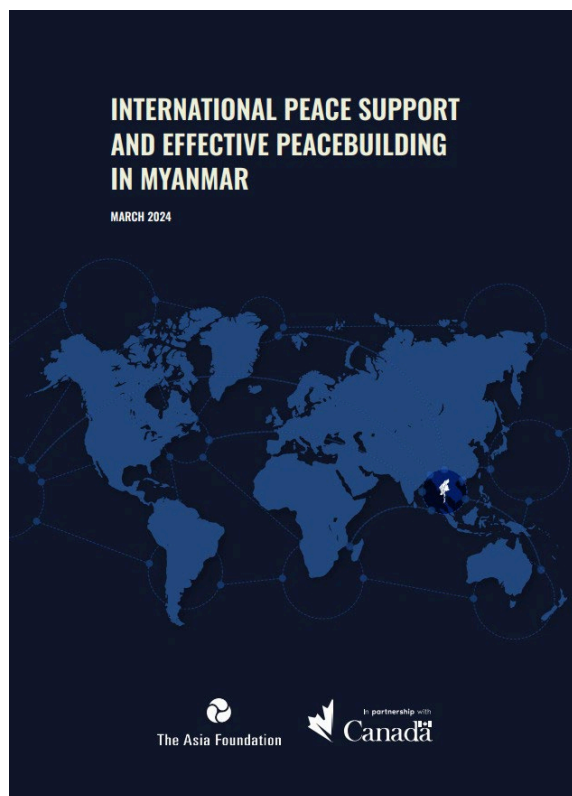


## [Strengthening Care Economies in Asia and the Pacific](#)

Women's equal access to economic opportunities is imperative for future growth and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific, yet one critical barrier for women to enter the workforce is the double burden of care and household responsibilities that disproportionately fall on women. Therefore, to advance women's economic security and opportunities, there is an urgent need to establish a [robust care economy ecosystem](#) that redistributes the burden of care through effective care policies and investments. This publication outlines the Asia Foundation's approach to building resilient care ecosystems. Learn more about the Foundation's [Women's Empowerment and Gender](#)

## [Digital Trade Agreements in Asia and the Pacific](#)

Digital trade agreements (DTAs) are instrumental in expanding the benefits of the digital economy in emerging Asia. Moreover, economies in Asia and the Pacific have been the key architects of trade rules for the digital era. DTAs set trade rules and economic collaboration in the digital economy and establish the minimum framework in which data and transactions are performed digitally among economies. This publication reviews the landscape of digital trade and digital economy agreements (DEAs) in Asia and the Pacific, analyzes the future evolution of DTAs and DEAs' scope, and identifies trends looking ahead. Learn more about the Foundation's [Technology & Development](#) program.



### [International Peace Support and Effective Peacebuilding in Myanmar](#)

This research project explores the peace process that surrounded the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in [Myanmar](#). It focuses on successes and failures of international support for peacebuilding at that time, drawing together findings that policymakers and practitioners in Myanmar and internationally can apply. While future efforts to find peace in Myanmar will look very different from those of the past, it is vital that lessons from the past are considered. Learn more about the Foundation's [Conflict and Fragility](#) program.



### [Securing Legal Recognition for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Indonesia](#)

This paper is part of the *Navigating Successful Policy Reform* series undertaken by Coalitions for Change 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 are similar to the development entrepreneurship model that has been highly successful in the Philippines. Learn more about the Foundation's [Coalitions for Change](#) program.



# 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.

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