



## The Asia Foundation



Welcome to The Asia Foundation's Washington, D.C. June newsletter. This issue celebrates **The Asia Foundation's 70th anniversary** and features a series of anniversary impact highlights on **thinking and working politically**, **Mongolia's Women's Business Center**, and **Sri Lanka's mediation boards**, as well as an upcoming event on **Thai Public Views on International Issues**.

## AsiaFoundation70



The Asia Foundation



Celebrating  
Seventy  
Years

Over seven decades, The Asia Foundation has partnered with change-makers in government, civil society, business, and academia in solving some of the greatest social and economic challenges facing Asia and the Pacific. This year, we celebrate 70 years of improving lives and expanding opportunities. Drawing on deep local knowledge and long-term relationships, the Foundation has invested in unleashing human ingenuity, building effective institutions, and promoting responsive public policies. We have helped economic growth to become more inclusive, enabled access to justice for those who need it most, raised women's voices, contributed to peaceful resolution of

violent conflicts, catalyzed local actions to respond to climate change, and supported leaders and social entrepreneurs in their journeys of creating positive change. To mark this milestone, we are sharing a series of highlights showing the scope and impact of our contributions past and present.

## 70th Anniversary Impact Highlights



### [Thinking and Working Politically: Navigating the Political Realities of Policy Reform](#)

For many years, the dominant philosophy in international development was to apply smart technical solutions and "best practices" in developed countries to complex development problems, though practitioners increasingly acknowledged that local political realities stymied even tried-and-true international expertise. In recognition of this challenge, The Foundation worked with local partners, leading universities, development think tanks, and other NGOs in pioneering a new approach to designing and implementing programs that grappled with local context known as "[thinking and working politically](#)" (TWP). TWP emphasizes that effective development strategies require a close reading of local social, political, and historical dynamics; that they must adapt to the web of interests in the policy environment; and that they must prioritize local leadership over imported solutions. The [Coalitions for Change](#) program in the [Philippines](#), in partnership with the Australian government, illustrates the Foundation's pioneering contributions to public policy reform and the effectiveness of politically informed programming. Learn more about the Foundation's [Good Governance](#) program.



### [Empowering Women Entrepreneurs: Mongolia's Women's Business Center](#)

The Asia Foundation has spurred women's entrepreneurship in [Mongolia](#) by helping to create a crucial support structure for women seeking to own businesses and participate fully in economic opportunities. The Foundation launched the Mongolia Women's Business Center (WBC) in 2016 to help women start and grow small businesses. WBC has nurtured an environment where women's entrepreneurship can thrive and has paved the way for [greater women's leadership](#) in Mongolia's economy. Learn more about the Foundation's [Inclusive Economic Growth](#) program.



## [Enabling Citizen Access to Justice and Community Harmony: Three Decades of Support for Sri Lanka Mediation Boards](#)

Sri Lanka has long grappled with inequities in its justice system, but the Mediation Boards Act of 1988 established a new process for resolving disputes in which panels of trained mediators would help guide parties toward a mutually satisfactory settlement. To implement the Act, the Ministry of Justice turned to The Asia Foundation, a known and trusted partner in prior justice system development efforts. The Foundation worked with partners and experts to provide an initial group of 22 Family Court counselors and probation officers with the specialty skills needed to become Mediator Trainers, who, in turn, spread their expertise to training local volunteers. Decades on, Mediation Boards are now operational in every part of Sri Lanka and there are more than 8,800 trained mediators, resolving nearly 68,000 disputes in 2023 alone. The Foundation's support has been instrumental in ensuring equitable dispute resolution and access to justice for all, including ethnic and religious minorities and economically disadvantaged communities and similar programs are underway in Cambodia, China, Nepal, and Mongolia. Learn more about the Foundation's work in [Sri Lanka](#).

## Save the Date:

### Thai Public Views on International Issues

Tuesday, July 9, 9:30 - 11:00 am



What do Thais think about foreign policy, including geopolitics, democracy, and ASEAN? Join [Thomas Parks](#), the Foundation's former Country Representative in [Thailand](#) from 2017-2024 and recently appointed Vice President for Strategic Partnerships, for an in-person discussion on the findings of the [Thai Public Views on International Issues](#) survey and its implications for Thailand's role in Southeast Asia and its foreign policy more broadly. RSVP to the in-person discussion [here](#).



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