

PROGRAMS ADDRESSING VIOLENT CONFLICT



For more than 20 years, The Asia Foundation has been supporting programs that address the causes and consequences of violent conflict in Asia. The Foundation’s long-term presence and extensive ties with local leaders, governments, and organizations enables it to engage key actors and support programs in highly challenging and volatile environments.

In countries experiencing long-term violent conflict, the Foundation works closely with local partners to find innovative ways to address the problems that exacerbate conflict, bridge the divide between government and insurgent groups, improve opportunities for people living in conflict zones, and strengthen traditional methods of conflict management. For countries transitioning to democratic governance, the Foundation provides assistance to government and local partners to strengthen state institutions, facilitate dialogue, and address the most critical problems in areas affected by conflict.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

The Asia Foundation works closely with local partners to conduct rigorous analysis of the drivers of violent conflict, improve program design, and inform policymakers, civil society, and donors.

PHILIPPINES

The Foundation’s study of community-based conflict found that feuds among clans (*rido*), rather than insurgent-related violence, are the leading cause of everyday conflict in Mindanao. Subsequent studies on *rido* conducted by Mindanao-based academic institutions and civil

society organizations, in close coordination with the Foundation, have documented more than 1,200 *rido* cases—going back to the 1930s—that have killed more than 4,000 people and displaced thousands. The studies showed that *rido* usually stems from local land conflicts and political rivalries. These findings have played an important role in the wider peace process in Mindanao, as the media has become more nuanced in its reporting of conflicts; and key stakeholders in peace negotiations are better able to differentiate between violence due to clan conflicts and violence among armed insurgent groups.

SRI LANKA

The Foundation led a joint initiative with the World Bank and governments of the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom to study the relationship between aid, conflict, and peacebuilding. The study analyzed the changing dynamics of conflict and peace in Sri Lanka since 2000 and examined how international engagement has impacted the peace process. The study revealed the need for more realistic development objectives; greater strategic coordination among the donor and international communities; and assistance programs that are based on a sound understanding of the unique circumstances of each conflict. The results of the study are enabling the Foundation, and other international donors, to develop more effective conflict-related programs in Sri Lanka and across the region.

TIMOR-LESTE

The Foundation supported research and a series of working seminars organized by the Timor Institute of Development Studies (TIDS) that identified precipitating causes of violence, and

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The Asia Foundation has been supporting programs that address the causes and consequences of violent conflict in Asia for more than 20 years.

The Foundation supports programs and maintains operations in conflict-affected areas across Asia, including: Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Pakistan, Mindanao & the Sulu Archipelago (Philippines), Southern Thailand, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Aceh (Indonesia).

The Foundation has a history of supporting countries in difficult and volatile transition periods, including Afghanistan (2002-present), Timor-Leste (1999-present), and Cambodia (1992-present).

devised practical policy recommendations for the government to reduce national tensions and instability.

SUPPORTING NATIONAL PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

The Asia Foundation supports local efforts to resolve protracted conflicts where alienated minority populations or armed insurgent movements are engaged in violent resistance against the state, majority population, or their allies in the conflict-affected region. Foundation programs help to improve prospects for peaceful settlement by strengthening constituencies for peace and facilitating dialogue between government and disaffected groups.

PHILIPPINES

The Foundation is supporting a diverse set of local efforts to improve prospects for a peaceful settlement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The Foundation has identified domestic political pressure, and lack of public information, as the most critical obstacles to achieving a lasting peace. To address these issues, Foundation partners from the Christian and Muslim communities, the private sector, and local civil society are engaging with dissident groups and other stakeholders to enhance dialogue, explore compromise, and strengthen the influence of constituencies supporting the peace process. To improve community dialogue and facilitate informed public involvement in the peace process, the Foundation supports Mindanao-based media organizations to improve their coverage of the peace process. The Foundation is also strengthening important local Muslim institutions to prepare them to manage regional development and rebuild in conflict-affected regions upon the signing of a peace agreement with the MILF. The Foundation implemented a similar project to support the peace process between the government and the Revolutionary Party of Workers in Mindanao (RPMM), a local breakaway faction of the communist insurgency.

THAILAND

The Foundation's programs promote reconciliation and address the causes of violence in Thailand's conflict-affected southern provinces. The Foundation is supporting the King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI), a highly regarded Thai organization, to reconvene stalled discussions on a comprehensive peace policy for southern Thailand. The project builds upon the work of the National Reconciliation

Commission (NRC), which in 2005-06 proposed an important set of policy recommendations for national reconciliation, most of which have yet to be implemented. To resurrect the momentum of the NRC process and deliver a practical and politically viable reform package to the current government, the project team is convening a series of public consultations and workshops with senior government officials, the military, and civil society. To complement these policy-based initiatives and build vital public support for the peace process, Foundation programs also work with the media to ensure improved local coverage of key issues.

AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

The Foundation is supporting the ongoing Afghanistan-Pakistan Peace Jirga process aimed at reducing conflict along the volatile shared border. At the request of the Government of Afghanistan, the Foundation supported the development of Peace Jirga Secretariat management and staffing structures for the first Peace Jirga meeting in Kabul in August 2007. To provide avenues for community engagement in the peace-building process, the Foundation also helped broadcast Peace Jirga roundtables and speeches on national radio and television stations. Foundation support is helping to develop the mandate, structure, and staff of the recently established Afghan Secretariat for the Peace Jirga.

NEPAL

Foundation programs are supporting the peace process and post-conflict political transition. Ethnic minority populations along Nepal's southern border have traditionally been excluded from decisionmaking in Kathmandu. These minority groups now face exclusion from the official peace process, which could undermine the long-term stability of the new government. The Asia Foundation serves as program manager for the Coalition for Constituent Assembly Support (CoCAS), an alliance of Nepali organizations that is disseminating analyses of constitutional issues, conducting civic education, and facilitating public discussion on the constituent assembly process in all 75 districts of Nepal.

ADDRESSING LOCAL GRIEVANCES

The Asia Foundation's programs address the long-term drivers of violent conflict by supporting local efforts to reform discriminatory governance practices and policies

that alienate minority populations, and expanding participation in the political process to marginalized groups.

THAILAND

In southern Thailand, the Foundation supports programs to address key grievances identified by the Thai-Malay minority population. The Thai-Malay population has long been frustrated by ongoing affronts to Muslim values and traditions, discriminatory laws and regulations, and unresolved human rights abuses. In partnership with the Muslim Lawyers Association and the Cross-Cultural Foundation, the Foundation supports programs to identify laws and regulations that exacerbate tensions and discriminate against Muslims. Once identified, program partners work with stakeholders to draft amended laws and regulations, and engage with key officials and influential groups to advocate for recommended changes.

Since 1961, the Foundation has been working with private Islamic secondary schools (*pondoks*) in the Thai-Malay community reform their curriculum to help Muslim students advance economically and socially within Thai society. In conflict-affected provinces, young Thai-Malay have relatively few options for employment, economic advancement, and integration into Thai society, and are often relegated to traditional work in small-scale fisheries, family orchards, and rubber plantations. The perception of unequal opportunity generates frustration and resentment. The Foundation's current program is assisting a core group of 12 Islamic schools to modernize the school curriculum, incorporate culturally relevant civics studies, and provide students with the skills necessary to prosper in Thailand's competitive job market. The program is also working with Thai-Malay students in Thai universities to allow them to more effectively operate in mainstream Thai society without sacrificing their cultural or religious values, thereby increasing the odds that they will remain in school until graduation.

SRI LANKA

Foundation programs in Sri Lanka are improving access to justice for conflict-affected populations, and addressing long held grievances of the minority Tamil and Muslim populations in the East. The Foundation is supporting local civil society efforts to identify and reform discriminatory laws, policies, and administrative practices; enable marginalized groups to fully exercise their civil and

political rights; and improve alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

AFGHANISTAN

In a 2007 study, the Foundation found that the greatest problems facing ordinary Afghans at the local level are unemployment, poor service delivery, and a lack of security. The growing disaffection of the population stems in large measure from the absence of credible Afghan administrative and security institutions to address these problems. The Foundation is leading a multi-stakeholder effort to improve sub-national governance which includes funding and technical assistance for the Independent Directorate of Local Administration/Governance (IDLG) for sociopolitical research on Afghanistan's southern and eastern tribal areas. This program includes facilitation of IDLG's outreach to tribal and religious leaders in Wardak province through NGO network-facilitated activities, and development and dissemination of a comprehensive three-year sub-national strategic workplan. Foundation support is also enabling the IDLG to facilitate collaboration and dialogue among key actors involved in sub-national governance, including traditional and religious local leadership.

STRENGTHENING FRAGILE INSTITUTIONS

The Asia Foundation's programs help to strengthen fragile state institutions where governance failures can create an environment more conducive to violent conflict.

AFGHANISTAN

After a quarter century of civil war, one of the most critical challenges facing Afghanistan is the establishment of a capable and legitimate central government. The Foundation has assisted Afghans in their efforts to rebuild the country through the establishment of an interim government, the development of a new constitution, and the implementation of national voter registration, civic education, media monitoring, and planning for the 2004 Presidential and 2005 National Assembly and Provincial Council elections.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The Asia Foundation supports efforts to resolve conflicts at the local level through indigenous (or traditional)

dispute resolution methods, and dialogue between key local actors.

PHILIPPINES

The Foundation supports local government and civil society in Mindanao to facilitate resolution of long-running clan (or *rido*) conflicts. Foundation partners are facilitating exchanges between feuding clans, and arranging for final settlement of rido through the use of local customs and practices. Since 2006, such efforts have led to the final settlement of more than 70 long-running rido conflicts. One of the most high-profile cases of rido between the Tauyan and Mangansakan was resolved on March 11, 2007, in a grand *kanduli* (thanksgiving ritual feast) marking the end of a 21-year-old feud. In March 2008, Foundation partners facilitated the resolution of the Imam-Macapeges feud, clearing the way for rehabilitation of Matanog municipality, part of the former MILF Camp Abubakar that was overrun by the Philippine military in mid-2000.

NEPAL

In response to the breakdown of traditional methods of dispute resolution in conflict-affected communities in Nepal, the Foundation is helping to establish new mechanisms of village-based conflict management. The Foundation collabo-

rates with NGO partners and local government to provide facilitated, interest-base mediation services in some of the country's most remote and conflict-affected districts. These efforts include increasing community and government support for mediation services, strengthening mediator competency, mobilizing community members as catalysts for peaceful interaction and ongoing community dialogue, and conducting research to deepen understanding of Nepali approaches to community mediation and social harmony.

SRI LANKA

The Foundation has long supported efforts to facilitate multi-ethnic dialogue in the eastern province of Sri Lanka to mobilize rapid community and government responses before tensions escalate into violence. The Foundation has worked extensively with Sri Lankan civil society on human rights and conflict programming to help disadvantaged groups lacking political and economic power to assert their rights, and address internal conflicts and security concerns. Under the Local Economic Growth (LEG) program, the Foundation is sponsoring public/private dialogues in four provinces that bring together local actors from different political parties, ethnic groups, and religions, to consider challenges and opportunities for local peace building.

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