


# The Asia Foundation

**The Asia Foundation (TAF)** is a nonprofit, mission-driven [international development](#) organization committed to improving lives across Asia.<sup>[2]</sup> Its work across the region focuses on governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment and climate action, and regional and international cooperation. The Foundation's Let's Read program is a free digital library in local languages and puts digital content and books into the hands of students, educators and leaders in 20+ countries. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit [501\(c\)\(3\) organization](#) working with public and private partners, and receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral multilateral development agencies, foundation, corporations and individuals.<sup>[1]</sup> The Foundation was established in 1954 by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) to undertake cultural and educational activities on behalf of the United States Government in ways not open to official U.S. agencies.<sup>[3]</sup>

On 1 February 2023, Laurel E. Miller took over as president of the Foundation. She previously directed the Asia program at the [International Crisis Group](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

## Impact

- Protecting the basic rights of women to counter [human trafficking](#), fight gender-based violence, increase political participation, and strengthen legal systems.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Providing life-changing professional opportunities for newly emerging Asian leaders.<sup>[6]</sup>
- Reducing the human and financial toll of natural disasters by equipping government officials, businesses, and community leaders in disaster planning and response.<sup>[7]</sup>
- Creating jobs by improving the business climate and reducing red tape for local entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- Reducing violence through peacebuilding efforts in some of the most entrenched conflict zones in the region, including Southern Thailand, Pakistan, Mindanao, and Sri Lanka.<sup>[8]</sup>

<div>The Asia Foundation</div> <div> The Asia Foundation</div>	
Formation	1954
Type	Nonprofit organization
Headquarters	San Francisco, California, United States
President and CEO	Laurel Miller
Revenue (2019)	\$104,324,731 <sup>[1]</sup>
Expenses (2019)	\$104,757,151 <sup>[1]</sup>
Website	<a href="http://asiafoundation.org">asiafoundation.org</a> ( <a href="http://asiafoundation.org">http://asiafoundation.org</a> )

- Conducting empirical surveys to assess the quality and responsiveness of government services, patterns of corruption, and levels of violence, including for years the most comprehensive public opinion poll in [Afghanistan](#).<sup>[9]</sup>
- Providing books to tens of thousands of [schools](#), [libraries](#), and universities.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Global presence

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The Asia Foundation addresses issues on both a country and regional level through its permanent offices on the ground in the Asia Pacific region. The foundation's staff are known for the depth of insights and granularity of knowledge on a variety of development challenges. Besides its offices across the region, the Foundation has an office in San Francisco and an office in Washington, D.C.

## Program areas

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### **Governance**

The Asia Foundation's work in governance focuses on encouraging:

- More efficient and effective government systems, structures, and services
- More transparent and accountable governance institutions and practices
- More inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms
- Fairer, more just, and more accessible legal systems, services, and decision making
- More effective strategies, approaches, and mechanisms to mitigate conflict

### **Environment and climate action**

- Increasing societal benefits through entrepreneurship, partnerships, and innovation
- Increasing attention to environment and climate change in national and local development strategies
- Increasing cross-sectoral cooperation in natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, and environmental conflict mitigation
- Encouraging public and private investment in clean energy, sustainable infrastructure, and [green growth](#)

### **Women's empowerment and gender equity**

- Expanding women's economic opportunities
- Increasing women's personal rights and security, and
- Advancing women's political participation.

## Economic development

- Expanding economic opportunities through reading and digital literacy skills, education reform, STEM, and workforce development
- Improving business environment for private sector growth and job creation
- Strengthening policy measures for continued economic growth in Advanced Middle Income Countries

## Exchanges

Through its LeadEx program, The Asia Foundation invests in equipping and developing emerging leaders in Asia, as well as seeking to encourage greater understanding between Asians and Americans with the ultimate aim of contributing toward strengthened U.S.-Asia relations. The Asia Foundation has a more than half-century partnership with the Henry Luce Foundation to administer an internship program in the Asia Pacific for young Americans with leadership potential. Since 1974, the Asia Foundation has developed and overseen placements for hundreds of Luce Scholars in Asia.<sup>[11]</sup>

## History

"The Asia Foundation (TAF) was established in 1954 to undertake cultural and educational activities on behalf of the United States Government in ways not open to official U.S. agencies."<sup>[12]</sup> The Asia Foundation is an outgrowth of the Committee for a Free Asia, which was founded by the U.S. government in 1951.<sup>[13]</sup> CIA funding and support of the Committee for a Free Asia and the Asia Foundation were assigned the CIA code name "Project DTPILLAR".<sup>[14]</sup>

In 1954, the Committee for a Free Asia was renamed the Asia Foundation (TAF) and incorporated in California<sup>[15]</sup> as a private, nominally non-governmental organization devoted to promoting democracy, rule of law, and market-based development in post-war Asia.

Among the original founding officers of the board were presidents/chairmen of corporations including T.S. Peterson, CEO of Standard Oil of California (now Chevron), Brayton Wilbur, president of Wilbur-Ellis Co., and J.D. Zellerbach, chairman of the Crown Zellerbach Corporation; four university presidents including Grayson Kirk from Columbia, J.E. Wallace Sterling of Stanford, and Raymond Allen from [UCLA](#); prominent attorneys including Turner McBaine and A. Crawford Greene; Pulitzer Prize-winning writer [James Michener](#); [Paul Hoffman](#), the first administrator of the Marshall Plan in Europe; and several major figures in foreign affairs.

In 1966, [Ramparts](#) revealed that the [CIA](#) was covertly funding a number of organizations, including the Asia Foundation.<sup>[12]</sup> A commission authorized by President Johnson and led by Secretary of State Rusk determined that the Asia Foundation should be preserved and overtly

funded by the US government. Following this change, The Asia Foundation was classified as a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization under the section 501(c)(3) of the [Internal Revenue Code](#).<sup>[16]</sup> The foundation began to restructure its programming, shifting away from its earlier goals of "building democratic institutions and encouraging the development of democratic leadership" toward an emphasis on Asian development as a whole (CRS 1983).

## Board of trustees

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## External links

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- [Official website of the Asia Foundation \(https://asiafoundation.org/\)](https://asiafoundation.org/)
- [Asia Foundation Records \(http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt5v19r7m6/\)](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt5v19r7m6/) at the Hoover Institution Archives (<https://www.hoover.org/library-archives>)