The Asia Foundation

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE)

August 31, 2023

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that The Asia Foundation reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment, and Anti-Corruption. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact. We welcome feedback on its contents.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication. Additional information on our programs can be found our [website](#).

Sincerely,

Laurel E. Miller
President and Chief Executive Officer

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives and expanding opportunities across Asia and the Pacific. Informed by decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region is focused on good governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment and climate action, and regional and international relations. Headquartered in San Francisco, with an office in Washington, DC, The Asia Foundation works through its network of 18 country offices across Asia and the Pacific. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality
(Addressing Principles 1 and 2- Human Rights)

The Asia Foundation works to advance women's rights, gender equality, and social inclusion. Through our offices across Asia and the Pacific, local partners, and program teams, the Foundation works to engage governments in policy and legal change and support diverse women's organizations and networks to advocate for and realize these changes. The Foundation's women's empowerment and gender equality work focuses on women's economic empowerment, women's and girls' rights and security, and women's political voice and leadership. The Foundation works with local partners to strengthen legal and policy frameworks to address gender-based violence (GBV), trafficking-in-persons (TIP), and forced migration and support access to justice through a trauma-informed and survivor-centered approach.

Recent program highlights:

- In the Pacific, the Foundation is implementing a five-year United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded program called the *Pacific Regional Initiative and Support for More Effective Counter Trafficking in Persons* program. The program addresses TIP through a holistic, multi-sectoral approach that engages an inclusive cross-section of Pacific Island Countries stakeholders from government, civil society, and the private sector. It is grounded in a community-centered partnership approach that fortifies local strategies and interventions. The project is taking a gender equality and social inclusion lens to 1) improve prevention through enhanced local and community-based mechanisms and strategies to prevent TIP; 2) strengthen protection and sustainable durable solutions and services for TIP victims; and 3) build capacity to prosecute traffickers and increase access to legal services by TIP victims.
- In the Philippines, the Foundation is implementing the USAID-funded *Initiatives for Advancing Community Transformation* project, which has supported over 100 local CSOs in promoting civic and political participation in support of human rights. The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)-funded *WE-Defend: Women Environmental Defenders in the Philippines* program empowers women environmental defenders to meaningfully participate across all levels of environmental governance. The DRL-funded *Empowered Movements for Rights and Gender Equality* program supports local networks and movements that promote an end to violence, discrimination, and abuse of LGBTQI+ persons in the Philippines.
- In Timor-Leste, through the *Nabilan* program supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Foundation works with government, civil society, and communities to provide front-line support services and evidence-based prevention to end violence against women and children. Nabilan partners have provided over 50,000 unique services to women and children since 2015, including legal aid, medical treatment, shelter, counselling, education, referrals, and reintegration support. Analyzing violence against women using a gender-power analysis, Nabilan promotes inclusive and intersectional approaches to prevention. The program adapts and

contextualizes best-practice interventions to change understanding of what works and inform policy, such as a re-design of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence.

Principles 3, 4, 5 and 6: Labour
The Asia Foundation has a long history of promoting labor rights and empowering individuals in the workplace, including migrant worker rights across Asia. The Foundation has also been active in advocating for policy reforms in the care economy.

Recent program highlights:

- In Bangladesh, the Foundation is implementing the *Promoting Decent Work and Acceptable Working Conditions in the Tannery Sector* project. The DRL-funded project helps workers and supervisors understand and implement OSH measures and labor rights and provides a platform for owners, workers, and government agencies to cooperate to improve the tannery sector. The project organized several multi-stakeholder dialogues on subjects including participatory labor inspections and solid-waste recycling.
- In Vietnam, the Foundation implemented the *Excellence through Engagement* project funded by DRL to support reforms to, and implementation of, the newly revised Labor Code and its progressive aspects related to freedom of association and trade union organizing, in order to expand adherence to international labor rights in Vietnam.
- In Thailand, the Foundation has been active in advocating for policy reforms related to the care economy and economic growth. The Foundation administered a study in 2023 on the issues, challenges, and potential solutions for childcare provision to support women's workforce participation in Thailand, and engaged a range of government policymakers in discussions, including those from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, which oversees childcare standards. The Foundation also convened a high-level *Care Economy Dialogue* on the margins of the G20 Leaders' Summit in Bali on November 12-14, 2022 where the Foundation presented its white paper on the care landscape in Asia and the Pacific and brought together stakeholders from governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector across the region to discuss issues around care, resulting in a Roadmap for Action with recommendations for governments in the region on how to invest in a resilient care ecosystem.

Principles 7, 8 and 9: Environment
The Asia Foundation utilizes politically informed, context-driven, and evidence-based programming approaches to advance progressive change on complex environmental challenges. Programing in three broad areas that include climate and disaster resilience; climate change mitigation and green growth; and natural resources management, the Foundation works across sectors and boundaries, with unique capacities in multi-stakeholder engagement; public participation, transparency, and accountability; and transboundary cooperation.

Recent program highlights:

- In Nepal, the *Data for Development Project* (D4D) funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, produced, shared, and used data to address Nepal's developmental challenges. The Foundation's country office in Nepal partnered with the Youth Innovation Lab (YI Lab) to support the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority under the Ministry of Home Affairs to enhance and operationalize an integrated Disaster Information Management System, Building Information Platform Against Disaster (BIPAD). BIPAD successfully integrated three datasets from various sources to the platform, developed risk visualization modules for six new

municipalities, and developed a data archive on the portal for air pollution and river/rains, among other improvements. The D4D program also created technical manuals for targeted user groups and built the capacity of 329 participants from all seven provincial governments on data utilization for monsoon preparedness. The portal is mainly being used by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (ND RRMA) at the federal level, along with provincial governments and 14 local governments for disaster preparedness.

- In Southeast Asia, the *Mekong Safeguards* program funded by USAID and DFAT supports policy makers, government regulators, major financiers, developers, and contractors with information and tools to foster consistent application of environmental, social, and governance standards, particularly for power generation and transportation. While recognizing the economic-growth imperative of this underdeveloped region and the role of infrastructure in contributing to growth, the program promotes profitable economic growth supported by sustainable infrastructure that causes less harm to the environment, biodiversity, and people. USAID Mekong Safeguards aims to (a) minimize negative environmental impacts of infrastructure projects by fostering more robust and consistent application of environmental, social, and governance standards and (b) encourage decision makers to avoid unnecessary, harmful infrastructure through smart technologies, system-scale infrastructure planning, and innovations.
- The *Improving Governance of Land Use, Land-Use Change & Forestry (SETAPAK)* project in Indonesia supported by FCDO aims to improve forest and land governance by strengthening government transparency, accountability, and law enforcement, and by building civil society capacity and networks. The program takes a collaborative approach to identify the right individuals, groups, and organizations with which to build coalitions, develop partners' capacities for targeted advocacy, and provide targeted support through capacity building and technical assistance. SETAPAK works closely with national and subnational governments, CSOs, research institutions, and communities to promote transparency and accountability in spatial planning, permitting, and budgeting process.

Principle 10: Anti-corruption

The Foundation works to develop accountable and transparent institutions (including though anti-corruption efforts) in order to support democratic consolidation, arrest backsliding in developing democracies, and promote broad based growth.

Recent program highlights:

- In Mongolia, the Foundation implemented a comprehensive research program funded by the Asian Development Bank called *Assessing the Case Flow of Anti-corruption Cases in Mongolia*. The program provided substantial insights into the challenges currently constraining efforts to combat corruption through the legal system, as well as actionable recommendations to guide the Mongolian government in making capacity and process improvements.
- The Foundation has been implementing the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs' (SCA)-funded *South Asia Governance Fund* (SAGF) as the Fund Manager. Designed as a flexible mechanism to respond to existing contexts and emerging opportunities, the SAGF has been coalescing and supporting actions around four priority areas - Fiscal and Institutional; Political; Informational; and Social - and through four targeted funding windows. Beneficiary countries include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Since its inception, the SAGF has worked to accelerate and better target the SCA response to new and emerging governance opportunities and challenges in South Asia. SAGF has also been supporting the Indo-Pacific Strategy by prioritizing projects focused on anti-corruption and fiscal transparency, democracy assistance, and media and Internet freedom.