



The Asia Foundation



## **NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

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### **Foundations Launch New Project to Assist Vulnerable Populations Suffering from Global Economic Crisis in Thailand and Vietnam**

**Bangkok and Hanoi – January 4, 2010** – The global financial crisis has had a sharp, negative effect on the export-dependent economies of Asia, threatening to undermine gains made in recent years. Conditions continue to worsen for the working poor and migrant laborers whose hours and wages have been cut, forcing scores to return to their family homes. Rural communities are struggling to absorb returning laborers and make due without worker remittances. Data indicates that migrant workers, one of the most socially fragile groups in developing economies, have been severely affected, particularly women workers in the garment, textile, and electronics industries. Today, The Asia Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation announced a new initiative to alleviate the impact of the recession on the most vulnerable populations in Thailand and Vietnam. The new project will respond to the dire need for social services, training programs, and legal aid education as well as provide small emergency grants to civil society organizations.

Civil society organizations in Thailand and Vietnam are ideally positioned to help struggling workers weather the impact of the global economic downturn. Serving as a voice for society's marginalized groups, these organizations have also suffered a decrease in funding and are operating with fewer resources needed to improve public services and respond to their communities' most urgent needs. The project will provide financial support to these organizations and focus on sustainable solutions that address practical and effective community-based recovery.

For instance, in Thailand, the new project will facilitate emergency economic support and social services through the establishment of a Labor Crisis Center. The Center will provide *pro bono* legal aid and information to workers who have been laid off from their jobs or are facing

imminent dismissal. Counseling will be provided through office consultations and through a 24-hour telephone hotline. To advance public policy advocacy, the Center will create an economic and labor information data base. And in Vietnam, project activities will focus on working with civil society groups to help migrant workers access critical public services such as health and legal aid, and to support select rural cooperatives as they respond to the development needs of their communities. The project will also convene representatives from civil society, government agencies, the National Assembly, research institutes, the private sector, and the media for a national dialogue. Participants will discuss key challenges to equitable and sustainable development and share innovative and practical solutions to address these problems.

The Asia Foundation will implement this two-year, \$1,750,000 project with support from the Rockefeller Foundation.

#### About The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. The Foundation supports programs in Asia that help improve governance, law, and civil society; women's empowerment; economic reform and development; and international relations. Drawing on more than 50 years of experience in Asia, the Foundation collaborates with private and public partners to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges, and policy research.

With offices throughout Asia, an office in Washington, D.C., and its headquarters in San Francisco, the Foundation addresses these issues on both a country and regional level. In 2008, the Foundation provided more than \$87 million in program support and distributed over one million books and educational materials valued at \$41 million throughout Asia. For more information, visit <http://www.asiafoundation.org>.

#### About The Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation fosters innovative solutions to many of the world's most pressing challenges, affirming its mission, since 1913, to “promote the well-being” of humanity. Today, the Foundation works to ensure that more people can tap into the benefits of globalization while strengthening resilience to its risks. Foundation initiatives include efforts to mobilize an agricultural revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa, bolster economic security for American workers, inform equitable, sustainable transportation policies in the United States, ensure access to affordable and high-quality health systems in developing countries, accelerate the impact investing industry’s evolution, and develop strategies and services that help vulnerable communities cope with the impacts of climate change. For more information, please visit [www.rockefellerfoundation.org](http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org).

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