



# Bridging Borders

April 2012

## My Eye-opening Experiences with Externs in Thailand

By Yam Chenda Khvan of Sustainable Cambodia

My experience attending the externship program in Chiang Mai in January started with a 24-hour bus trip from Cambodia to Thailand. It was a very good learning experience because I had to communicate with Thai people to get directions with only my few words of Thai language. I had to stop many times during my trip: from Pursat Town to Battambang Province, then to Pao Pet, then Longkoeur Market (Cambodia-Thailand border), and then on to Bangkok and from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. That was a crazy day! I could not sleep on the bus because it was my first time, and I was very happy when I got off the bus and found my way to the BABSEA CLE House. You can imagine how glad I was to meet and make many friends there!

First, I had to adapt and discover everything about the BABSEA

CLE "campus". I am not a very good communicator in English, but I am happy to report that this time I did better than usual. I wanted to tell the others about Cambodia. I wanted to tell everyone about what we have... and do... because it's not as bad as they think and expect.

### Cultural Exchange

I really appreciated the opportunity to communicate and interact in English with all the other participants – from Australia, America, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Indonesia. Our first event was a communal international dinner and I was very proud to cook and present my traditional food, called Samlar Machou Trakoun (Morning Glory sour stew). I also gave a presentation on Sustainable Cambodia, describing all our projects. We work in rural areas, empowering villagers to create a sustainable quality of life: with

After our training in Chiang Mai, my group went to Muban Chom-beung Ratchapat University (MCRU), southwest of Bangkok. This gave me the opportunity to interact with people from other cultures, varying backgrounds and different careers, while preparing to teach a Clinical Legal Education (CLE) class to law students there.

### Team Teaching

I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the other team members and sharing this experience with them opened my eyes and my mind. The workshops and lessons -- and especially conducting classroom teaching -- were all incredibly beneficial to me personally. They gave me many things to think about, especially with respect to considering  
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**"I wanted to tell everyone about what we have... and do... because it's not as bad as they think and expect."**

potential future careers and absolutely to apply to my current job and share with my colleagues. I had not previously thought I would be able to work in another country or contribute to international work projects in a positive way. However, after hearing the experiences of the other participants and their backgrounds, it is a possibility I am considering.

Our experience at MCRU also helped me understand the different needs of learners in a practical way. The teaching methodologies assignment taught me to broaden my thinking to take into consideration the benefit of activities like energizers and small group discussions. These two activities allowed us to ensure that the MCRU CLE learners with English as a Second Language were included and understood the task. It was also a good experience



for me to share how to conduct classroom activities, as I have been a teacher for 16 years in Cambodia.

## Field Trips

I also learned a great deal on our field trips to local communities. The CLE clinic at MCRU is helping villagers with a land issue. I learned a lot about remote communities and resorts in Thailand, which are worth a lot of money and can create issues between poor people and rich people. I learned how important it is to help villagers work with the government to legally and fairly

resolve issues of land use and economic development.

Overall, I am incredibly grateful to BABSEA CLE for the opportunity to have had these experiences... and for the potential to learn a lot more in future programs. I feel I have greatly benefitted from this experience, especially in relation to my ability to take into account other people's feelings, their diverse backgrounds and the issues that impact and affect their opinions.

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