



# Bridging Borders

April 2012

## Stepping Out in Singapore: ASEAN region and Singapore pro bono culture

By Sarah Shi, Pro Bono Associate, Access to Justice LLP

One of the main themes in the speeches of Singapore's Chief Justice, Attorney General and President of the Law Society to mark the beginning of Legal Year 2012, was the vital importance of pro bono work. Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong called pro bono "the work of the Good Samaritan" and emphasized the need to actively cultivate a culture of doing pro bono work, starting from the time law students receive their university education, because, as he put it, doing such work "does not come from nature but from nurture".

Just ahead of the declaration of Legal Year 2012, in November 2011, BABSEA CLE Singapore was registered in Singapore. To celebrate and initiate its mission to coincide with the growing local pro bono spirit, the Singapore group began to plan the Inaugural Singapore Clinical Legal Education Conference and the Community Legal Education Training of Trainers Workshop held on 16-17 March 2012. The Conference and Workshop served as a forum to create opportunities

for promoting CLE in Singapore and throughout the ASEAN region. As CLE involves training persons to effectively provide legal aid to the community, the promotion of CLE ties in well with the expressed desire to revitalise Singapore's pro bono scene.

world, including almost all the ASEAN states, China, and South Africa. International support came from many BABSEA CLE partners, including Lux Development in Laos, UNDP in Vietnam, the Indonesian Legal Resources Center (ILRC) in Indonesia, and Open

Society Justice Initiative (OSJI).

Conference participants engaged with the speakers through interactive dialogue on a variety of topics, including the rationale for developing CLE programmes,

the various models of CLE, how to create sustainable CLE programmes, and the academic value and pedagogical methods of CLE. There were also sharing sessions between participants and speakers on various CLE initiatives they had organised.

### Highlights

Some of the highlights included talks by Bruce Lasky, the founder and co-director of BABSEA CLE, on the inspiring CLE programmes that have been conducted in Southeast Asia; and Kevin Kerrigan and Jonny Hall from



The Conference and Workshop were co-organised by Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia Community Legal Education Initiative (BABSEA CLE) and BABSEA CLE Singapore ([www.babseacle.org](http://www.babseacle.org)), Singapore Management University, Northumbria International Journal of Clinical Legal Education ([www.numyspace.co.uk/~unn\\_mlif/1/school\\_of\\_law/IJCLE/](http://www.numyspace.co.uk/~unn_mlif/1/school_of_law/IJCLE/)) and Access to Justice Asia ([accessjusticeasia.org](http://accessjusticeasia.org)).

The Conference and Workshop drew 70 participants not only from Singapore, but from all over the



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**During the Singapore conference, Dr Chantan Cheasan, Chancellor of Pannasastra University of Cambodia, officially honored BABSEA CLE Director Bruce Lasky, presenting him with a silver plaque in recognition of his contribution to CLE in Cambodia and throughout South-east Asia.**

Northumbria University on scholarship in CLE and how to successfully run a CLE programme as part of a university's compulsory course. On the home side, Delphia Lim and Mahdev Mohan from Access to Justice Asia spoke on public interest work, touching on their work done in Cambodia. Law professor Lei Thengat spoke on the clinical programme that she conducts at the National University of Singapore, and the local bar was represented by Wendell Wong, a partner in Drew & Napier LLC, who described the pro bono scene in Singapore, and the Law Society's director of pro bono services, Tanguy Lim, who answered questions from international participants on Singapore's pro bono activities.

Following the Conference, a Training of Trainers Workshop was conducted on 17 March. There, participants were invited to strengthen their knowledge on CLE teaching methodologies and to hone their skills in conducting CLE programmes by engaging in a series of hands-on interactive activities.

The Conference and Workshop provided another step in the right direction in the development of a sustainable pro bono culture in Singapore. Obviously, Legal Year 2012 means the time is right too, for BABSEA CLE Singapore to expand and strengthen the CLE network in Singapore and throughout the ASEAN region.

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