

Planning for the Future in Laos

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FLP-CLE, with the support of Lux Development, hosted BABSEA CLE at the National University of Laos for an important two-day workshop in February. The strategic planning workshop – the first of its kind in Laos -- was officially opened by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science (FLP), Prof Bounthieng Phommachanh, and the Director of FLP-CLE, Prof. Souliyan Rouchanatha.

The turnout for the workshop was large and enthusiastic: 15 CLE students, 10 law lecturers and five heads of department, plus the BABSEA CLE staff: Bruce, Wendy, Elaine and Ivy and Lux Dev staff Marie and Sharon, plus the world's fastest English-Lao translator, Dimitri. Luckily, FLP has a large – and beautifully decorated – CLE space!

The aim of the workshop was to think about the future of FLP-CLE

-- how it can be developed over the next three years -- and to discuss the new in-house clinic. "There are big plans for CLE in Laos and it's important that everyone is involved in making these plans so that we can get everyone's ideas and include everyone's needs," Law Fellow Souliya told me.

Day One of the workshop focused on the importance of planning and how to make a strategic plan. On Day Two, participants had to use what they learned on Day One to devise their own plan. "It was not easy at first for the students to make a plan. They have no experience with this and so the concept was hard for them to understand," said Law Fellow Thip. Participants worked in groups to fill in the template of a strategic plan with a list of activities that would help them meet specific objectives for five major goals: bringing the CLE program forward to an accredited

course in the law faculty; opening an in-house legal assistance clinic; further developing their community teaching; fund-raising to meet financial goals and finally, internal capacity-building to enable law students and law lecturers to meet all these objectives.

"The best part of the workshop," according to Thip, "was that all members of CLE: students, teachers, and Deans all worked together and shared ideas."

One of the main topics considered in the planning was how to get CLE into the university curriculum. It takes four years for a course to be accredited in Laos. Instead of waiting that long, the CLE team have decided to join it with a new Human Rights course. By taking part in the Human Rights course, students will be able to get credits for the work they do with CLE. This would be a great step forward for CLE. Another step in this plan is to develop a Lao CLE textbook -- then CLE will be well on its way to being its own fully accredited course.

Thip reported that at the end of the workshop the group had completed the drafting of a one-year plan. "It's not perfect," Souliya added, "but it's something to work from and hopefully we can improve it." They have set up an In-house Clinic Team to prepare documents for the clinic that's not built yet -- another important step forward for the clinic and for FLP-CLE. The future is looking very bright in Laos!