

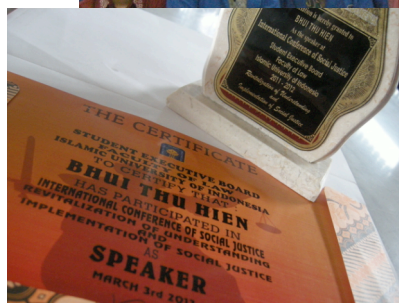
## A STAR IS BORN!

**Hien Bui Thu, CLE Advisor and Trainer, Viet Nam**

On 3 March 2012, I got the chance to attend an international conference in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on access to justice organized by the International Islamic University (IIU) -- in fact, I was one of the main speakers!

At first, I wasn't the one invited to speak at the 'Revitalization of Understanding and Implementation Of Social Justice' conference. It was my supervisor, BABSEA CLE Director Bruce Lasky, who was supposed to speak. He has a good professional relationship with both lecturers and students of IIU, supporting them to establish and develop a CLE program that is still very new for the school. It was unfortunate for Bruce (and fortunate for me, to be honest) that he couldn't arrange his time to attend. So I got the encouragement from BABSEA CLE and the invitation from IIU to participate.

Just a few days before the conference took place, I started to find out its purpose, and also the expectation they put on me as the only international speaker. This kind of work is new for me. Although I had experienced being an international presenter in an international practicum, I would now be the only representative of this organization and the only international speaker – a big first-time-ever for me. Luckily, I never say 'no' to a challenge. I thought of a quote that I really like: 'Ships



bor but is that what ships are for?'. I wanted to be a ship that dares to launch to the ocean rather than stay safely in harbor with no idea what I can do.

Thanks to my colleagues, who gave me good advice, I eventually chose a topic that I feel strongly about: 'Access to Justice in Vietnam and The Response of Clinical Legal Education to Educate Future Lawyers'.

The conference itself was a big success and a wonderful opportunity for me to learn about so many things: to contribute to giving pro-bono and access to justice awareness to the next generation of IIU lawyers... and to assert myself.

### How did I help?

My presentation was not only about presenting information, but also about sharing my personal experience as a young lawyer who dedicates herself to access to justice work. For the presentation, I focused on three main parts. First

are safe in the harbor

of all, I had participants discuss on what we mean by access to justice. I think it was helpful for IIU law

students, because social justice or access to justice is not something they are taught at law school. In addition, based on the similarity of Viet Nam and Indonesia in terms of economic and social development, as well as the legal educational system, I presented about the current situation on access to justice in Viet Nam. But instead of lecturing, I led the audience in a comparison of what I had presented about Viet Nam with the same thing in their countries. Finally, the most important point I raised was about how CLE can respond to the needs of ethical lawyers who are willing to help people get access to justice. This part was especially helpful, I think, because some of the participants were not aware of the vital social justice component contained in the program.

### What did I learn?

In Vietnamese we have a saying that means the farther you go, the more you learn. For me, it definitely applied to this trip to Indonesia. The experiences and



# Bridging Borders

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*Hien Bui Thu, continued*

lessons I learned were not only about work and law but also about life, culture and religion. In addition, I had the good fortune to meet many professors who were experienced practically and academically in access to justice and social justice. Talking with them was a more precious lesson than anything published in books.

## **How did I assert myself?**

I don't usually feel good about myself after going through a new challenge. But this time, I did. I can't say my performance was excellent but at least I felt very confident and appreciated my capacity much more than before.

When you are still young, it is not easy to settle on one career choice. Being a public interest lawyer has always been my first choice, but after this trip, I found more concrete reasons to chase it. Because of all the meaningful things I experienced, I feel I really can contribute to society and make the world a better place.

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## **SAVE The DATE! Nov 10, 2012**

## **BABSEA CLE'S 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE PUBLIC INTEREST FAIR**



**Over 20 human rights organizations and  
volunteer and educational institutions came to  
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