



# 2008 Year in Review Newsletter

January 2009

## **Bridges Across Borders in Southeast Asia becomes Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia!**

The Southeast Asia Program of Bridges Across Borders (BAB) has grown by leaps and bounds in the last several years. Our remarkable growth has led the BAB Board of Directors to the decision that the Southeast Asia projects would be better managed by a Board of Directors that is entirely based in the Southeast Asia region and fully focused on those projects. Likewise, the BAB Americas projects require a Board of Directors that is fully focused on the Americas projects. We have therefore decided to make Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia (BABSEA) a separate organization. BABSEA remains fully committed to the purpose and ideals that led to our formation as part of Bridges Across Borders in 2003.



BABSEA incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the State of Florida in July. Our new Board of Directors consists of Bruce Lasky, David Pred, Wendy Morrish, Kevin Morely and Joanna Levitt. We are currently in the process of applying with the Internal Revenue Service to be recognized as a publicly supported 501c-3 organization. While we await our 501c-3 status, if you are a US citizen who would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to BABSEA, you can still do so by sending a check to our sister organization Bridges Across Borders and noting that the donation is for BABSEA. If you do not require a US tax deduction for your donation, you can make your contribution directly to BABSEA on our website or by sending a check or money order made out to Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia to the address below:

Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia  
PO Box 662  
Gainesville, FL 32602  
USA

## **Join us to Save Boeung Kak Lake and End Forced Evictions in Cambodia!**



Boeung Kak, Phnom Penh's iconic 133 hectare lake at the heart of the city, is about to be lost. Just five years ago the Municipality of Phnom Penh was inviting young architects and planners to offer designs to develop the lake environment as part of a progressive wider plan to develop Phnom Penh as the 'Pearl of Asia'. However, in 2007 that invitation was rejected in favor of a 99-year commercial lease to a Korean firm, a lease that under Cambodia's own Land Law is illegal. More than 4000 families who reside and make their living around the lake - many for over twenty years - are already

undergoing mass-displacement in the face of this commercial development. With over 20,000 people facing eviction and unemployment, the destruction of the lake will lead to the largest forced displacement of Cambodians since the Khmer Rouge emptied the cities in 1975.

Forced evictions in two lakeside communities - Village 4 and Village 22 - began in August after the company began pumping sand into the lake, causing homes in near the pumping station to be flooded, and in several instances, collapse. Our own Rudi Boa Community Center, which BABSEA founded in 2007 to provide education and health services to these communities, was demolished after we ourselves were evicted in November and many of our students' families bowed to pressure to move to the distant relocation site. BABSEA plans to re-open the Rudi Boa center at the relocation site in early 2009 in order to continue serving our students who have been resettled. However, we have not given up the fight to secure a just outcome for the thousands of remaining families.

Together with a coalition of partner organizations, we have challenged the illegal lease and lake filling in court and we have trained community organizers to mobilize affected families to stand up for their rights. We have also launched the Save Boueng Kak campaign in an effort to convince the Municipality to change course.

WE NEED YOUR HELP to tell the Municipality of Phnom Penh to:

- Stop filling Boueng Kak lake
- Consult the public about how to develop this area for the benefit of the city and the lakeside residents
- End all threats and intimidation against community members and NGOs and ensure that there will be no forced evictions in Boeung Kak
- Insist that the developer foots the bill for fair and just compensation according to the market rate for anyone who is forced to move

Sign the petition @ <http://www.petitionspot.com/petitions/SaveBoeungKakLake>

## **BABSEA and Tiny Toones Open New Youth Drop-in Center**

In July, BABSEA and Tiny Toones held the grand opening of our new Youth Drop-in Center in the heart of Phnom Penh's Toul Tum Pong district. Jointly run by BABSEA and Tiny Toones' Founder and Creative Director Tuy Sobil, aka KK, the new drop-in center provides free classes in English, Khmer, mathematics, art, and computer skills, alongside break-dance and music lessons to the underprivileged youth of Phnom Penh. The center boasts two large classrooms, a library, a computer lab, a fully equipped recording studio, a basketball court, and two tiled dance floors for practicing break-dancing.



Tiny Toones, which began with KK providing break-dancing lessons to neighborhood kids from his house, is giving disadvantaged kids a chance to be part of a ground breaking urban dance movement in Cambodia, while also teaching personal and social responsibility, self-respect, and how to survive and succeed in a tough urban environment. Understanding the daily struggles faced by inner-city poor kids – struggles not unlike the ones he faced growing up in the ghetto of Long Beach, California – KK and the other Tiny Toones staff act as big brothers and positive role models to hundreds of disadvantaged kids in Phnom Penh. They are able to share

some of the life skills and lessons they learned the hard way growing up in similar difficult circumstances in the United States, and encourage kids to stay in school and away from drugs, gangs, and other unhealthy behavior. With BABSEA funding and management support, Tiny Toones gives kids from Phnom Penh's poorest neighborhoods a positive and creative outlet, as well as a support network on which to lean when times are tough. With our new Drop-in Center, Tiny Toones kids now have a safe, drug and violence-free space where they can stay off the streets, take advantage of free education, and practice their dance moves.

## **Community Legal Education (CLE) Initiatives – Teams from Thailand and Laos Working Together**

Our Community Legal Education (CLE) Initiative is working to implement university based clinical legal education and community empowerment programs throughout Southeast Asia – specifically in Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. The CLE program engages in outreach, exposure, program development and training activities with universities, government and non-government organizations, as well as the legal profession.

In August, BABSEA and volunteers from Thailand and Laos co-developed and taught a seminar on human trafficking with an aim to exchange ideas and methodology for legal training in their respective countries. The 4-day seminar was held at the Faculty of Law in Chiang Mai University (CMU) and was kicked off by the Head of Clinical Legal Education from the National University of Laos, the Dean of Faculty of Law from Chiang Mai University and BABSEA Co-Founder and CLE Director Bruce Lasky. During the seminar the volunteers exchanged ideas and finalized lesson plans before delivering the training to primary school students in Houi Lan village and a women's prison in Chiang Mai.



So far this year, BABSEA's CLE program has conducted more than a dozen of these types of trainings and exchanges throughout Southeast Asia. We continue to be amazed at the growth of the law students whom we work with in five countries. The CLE programs have opened their eyes to the social problems and inequities in their societies and have inspired them to be part of the solution as they advance their legal careers.

We were thrilled to be able to bring students, professors and trainers together for the first time from all of our CLE university partner programs in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Alliance for Justice Education (GAJE) conference. BABSEA co-hosted this year's conference together with Ateneo Human Rights Center in the Philippines from Dec 7-14. Students and professors from each of BABSEA's partners had the chance to show off what they have been doing to advance clinical legal education in their countries, and both inspire and be inspired from others in the region and internationally. We are very grateful to all those who answered our call for donations to help support the students to attend this conference. It was an incredible event for them and for us, and we are confident that their participation will help increase support for them in the coming years.



## **More BABSEA CLE University Partners To Open Legal In-House Consultation Clinic Offices**

Our CLE partner universities in Vietnam and Thailand are preparing to open new offices to assist disadvantaged people's access to legal procedures. Money for the construction, office equipment and computers was raised, and is continuing to be raised, by BABSEA and the Faculties of Law in each country.



Each of the new offices provide a venue for CLE programs to give advice and assistance to community members and also allows for a central point to coordinate and administrate the expanding CLE program at the Faculty. The rooms provide space for students and law lecturers alike to prepare their participatory educational lesson plans and teaching techniques; gather and discuss various CLE and Human Rights issues; and further strengthen the program.

We would like to acknowledge the continued technical support of the senior lawyers who volunteer with us through our partner organization The International Senior Lawyers Project (ISLP) and the many legal advisors offering their professional services, resources with legal work, research supervision as well as monitoring and evaluation of the BABSEA CLE programs.

## **BABSEA Legal Internship Program making valuable contributions**

Since 2004, BABSEA has been engaged in operating a Legal Studies Internship Program, which provide students from around the globe with a real world learning experience, while exposing them to the diverse range of legal and human rights issues in Southeast Asia. Through this experience our interns achieve a greater understanding of the dynamic relationship between academic knowledge and its practical application to the legal and human rights issues that arise within the community.

This year we've welcomed interns from the USA, Canada, the UK, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. BABSEA also conducted our first virtual legal internship program through Queensland University of Technology (QUT), which was a first for QUT as well. BABSEA legal internships produce tangible outcomes that help disadvantaged populations gain greater awareness and access to their legal and judicial systems.



In light of the success of past years' programs in Cambodia, Thailand and Laos, BABSEA is expanding the 2009 Legal Studies Internship Program to include placements with BABSEA partner universities in Vietnam and Malaysia as well. If you are interested in interning, please visit our website [www.babsea.org](http://www.babsea.org) or contact us for more information.

## **Empowering Threatened Asian Communities to Resist Forced Displacement**

Over 15 million people every year are forcibly displaced to make way for large development projects such as mines, dams, power plants, infrastructure and plantations. Many others are evicted by economic and political elites who use the pretext of development to grab land for personal gain. Frequently the projects driving this displacement are beset with corruption and unjust practices, perpetuating a development model that favors powerful interests at the cost of deeper poverty and increased hardship for the most vulnerable. Because of weak legal institutions in many developing countries, affected and at-risk families are unable to protect their rights or seek legal recourse.

BABSEA is collaborating with the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), and the International Accountability Project (IAP) on a new popular educational initiative called the Community Guide to Challenging Forced Displacement. This initiative aims to empower communities facing displacement as a result of development and land-grabbing in Asia. The Community Guide is a comprehensive training resource for at-risk communities, covering their rights, strategies to exercise their rights, the risks they are likely to face, and the experiences of other communities. The Guide is first being developed in Cambodia, with future plans to develop versions in India and East Timor.



With the first volume of the Cambodian Guide nearly completed, we have already held numerous training workshops to test the curriculum with threatened urban, rural and indigenous Cambodian communities, as well as Training of Trainer workshops to begin training a cadre of Cambodian trainers to use the Community Guide as a teaching resource for communities they work with. The results have been extremely encouraging, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from community participants, many of whom have begun putting into practice the advocacy techniques that they learned in the training and demonstrating their understanding of the law and their rights. Even more encouragingly, after undergoing three BABSEA Training of Trainer workshops, members of a network of indigenous community activists are now delivering Community Guide trainings across the country to threatened indigenous communities

## **Community Legal Education Comes of Age in Malaysia**

Beginning in July 2008, BABSEA partner University of Malaya (UM), began the first ever accredited university based CLE program in Malaysia. The program is the result of much hard work, planning, and dedication to the collaborative effort between BABSEA and UM dating back more than two years.

Prior to this elective accredited course being implemented, UM conducted a variety of community teachings in schools, community centers, prisons and detention centers, through student involvement on a volunteer basis in the UM Community Outreach Program (COP). Realizing the value of having CLE as an accredited program, the UM team advocated strongly to make the course a reality and at the beginning of 2008, BABSEA Director Bruce A. Lasky was appointed by UM to work closely with UM Faculty members to plan, design, teach and implement this successful CLE program.



The 12 week course began with a juvenile justice focus, with the UM students being trained in teaching methods and developing and delivering teachings at the Kajang Juvenile Prison in Malaysia. Lessons and topics taught at the prison included, Introduction to Criminal Law, Law on Theft, Crimes Against People, Rights in Detention and Prison, Juvenile Rights and Rights When Being Arrested.

## **Community Development Program – Working “Hand in Hand” in Chamcar Bei**

Since launching the *Hand in Hand* community development project in Kep, Cambodia two years ago, we have made significant progress in achieving the community goals of improving the education, health, and livelihoods of the residents of the impoverished rural village of Chamcar Bei.



Our big news this year is the opening of a new Community Vocational Training Center (CVTC) to provide Chamcar Bei and surrounding village residents with agricultural and marketable skills training that can eventually lead them to economic self-sufficiency. The 30-acre site has five classrooms, a canteen, a volunteer house and ample land and water resources to develop a nursery and demonstration farm. So far this year we have trained nearly 100 farmers on animal raising, vegetable growing, and improved rice farming techniques and more than 60 women in sewing, weaving, and handicraft production.

Our most successful handicraft project so far has been the production of jewelry and other items, such as napkin holders and Christmas ornaments, from coconuts and other sustainable resources. Created through a partnership between BABSEA and Khmer Creations, a budding fair-trade jewellery company founded by former BABSEA staff member Antonia Marison, the products have already been selling like wildfire in local markets throughout Cambodia.



Training just got underway at the CVTC for another innovative project called Funky Junk, a brand created by our partner Carpe Diem of products handmade entirely from recycled plastic bags. Villagers are paid for plastic bags that they collect, and they are then washed, died, and transformed into yarn, which is crocheted to produce handbags and other beautiful crafts. This fair trade project not only provides good community-based employment, but also helps protect the environment.



To improve community health and decrease the incidence of disease, we have focused on improving water and sanitation facilities through the construction of 20 latrines and 20 open wells and the distribution of 300 home water filters. We have also worked closely with the Center for International Health to provide health check-ups and basic health education to the community, as well as professional development for Kep’s thirteen mid-wives on pre and post natal care and safe delivery techniques.

Our education program remains a cornerstone of the project. Developments this year include the expansion of courses being offered at the Community Learning Center, with 13 English classes serving 300 students of all ages and a new early childhood education program serving 80 three-five year olds. A community library and computer lab are being established now and will be operational by the end of the year. We also continue to support the public schools by providing scholarships to the poorest students, encouraging school enrollment and re-entry, and providing training and supplementary salaries to public school teachers.

Each of these initiatives has been planned and implemented by our community development team working closely with three community-based organizations (CBOs), which we helped the community establish over the last year. The CBOs are the core of the Hand in Hand project and they continue to take on more and more responsibility for the management of the development activities.

The project is made possible through support from Belgian foundations Friends of the Rainbow Schools and Banteay Meanchey, Kep-based resort Knai Bang Chatt, Canadian volunteer group Developing World Connections and private donations.



## **BABSEA is Proud to Announce the Second Annual Kep Trio**

**What: Half Marathon, 10K Run & 10K Bike Ride**

**When: February 28<sup>th</sup> & March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009**

**Where: Phnom Voar area of Kep, Cambodia**

The Kep Trio is a unique fundraising event, created by running enthusiast and former BABSEA volunteer Nikki Wise, designed specifically to support our Hand in Hand community development project in Chamcar Bei. Held in January 2008, the First Annual Kep Trio Event was an amazing success with more than 80 participants generating over \$50,000 in cash donations and delivering 50 new locally sourced bicycles to the community.



### **Event Outline**

10K Bike Ride - Saturday February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at 3:30pm

Half Marathon – Sunday March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 at 6:00am

10K Run / Fast Walk – Sunday March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 at 6:45am

Registration is US\$5 for local Cambodians and US\$50 for international participants. The registration fee covers participation in the event, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Kep Trio t-shirt or singlet, and dinner at the Sailing Club on Saturday night. For the 10K Bike Ride participants, the registration also covers the bicycle that will be donated to the community after the race.

As this is a fundraising event, we are encouraging all participants to raise as many charitable donations as possible and suggest a minimum donation of US\$200.

Online Registration at [www.babsea.org](http://www.babsea.org) is now open!

## Volunteer Programs Continue to Flourish



Volunteers continue to play a key role in supporting the growth of BABSEA and we are extremely thankful to have welcomed so many dynamic and enthusiastic groups and individuals to the team this year. While our volunteer programs provide participants with a unique opportunity to interact with local communities and gain a richer insight into the respective cultures in the countries they visit, the participants also make a valuable contribution to improving infrastructure and living conditions in those communities.

This year we've welcomed volunteer groups from Developing World Connections (DWC), United World College (UWC), and the One World Foundation, along with individual advisors offering their professional skills, including accounting, health care, communications, engineering, agronomy, education and legal work. Whether our volunteers are teaching English in slum communities and orphanages, working on development projects in rural villages, developing community legal education curriculum, or contributing to our advocacy campaigns, their efforts continue to make a difference to the lives of the individuals and communities with whom we work. If you are interested in volunteering, please visit our website [www.babsea.org](http://www.babsea.org) or contact us at [volunteer@babsea.org](mailto:volunteer@babsea.org).

## How You Can Help

We know that these are perilous economic times for many of us, but they are far more perilous for the communities we serve on the margins of Southeast Asian economies, where food prices have more than doubled in the past year. The contributions of our friends and supporters from around the world help us lend a helping hand to some of the world's most vulnerable people and they help us achieve our goal of bridging the vast divide between the world's 'haves' and 'have-nots'. If you are moved by our work, please consider making a financial contribution to support a specific BABSEA program or a general donation to help us further all of our programs.

Secure credit card donations can be made on our website at [www.babsea.org](http://www.babsea.org). Alternatively, you can send a check to:

Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia  
PO Box 662  
Gainesville, FL 32602  
USA

From all of us at Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all who have helped us establish, maintain and expand our programs. We couldn't have done any of this without you!