

NUS PRO BONO

SCOOP

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Dear PBG,

Semester 1 of AY17/18 has been a defining one for the NUS Pro Bono Group. As we head into the second half of the academic year, it is an opportune time to take stock of major developments which have laid the groundwork for strengthening our club's outreach.

Incremental Change

First, we were deliberate about instilling a sense of pride and professionalism within all our members by introducing general and specific training elements to our members. At a general level, the 'Access to Justice' segment during PBG Cohesion was intended to illustrate the importance of pro bono service in Singapore's legal system, and alert members to legal proscriptions on student volunteers. A talk by the Community Justice Centre also highlighted the fundamentals of communicating legal information to litigants-in-person. We also began to incorporate training elements unique to certain projects like Project Law Help and the Syariah Court Friends where volunteers learned about how to simplify legalese for their beneficiaries and interact with Malay-speaking litigants-in-persons through scenario-based role-play.

Second, we aim to pilot a PBG Internship Programme to allow members to experience other projects within the club. We hope that

our members will realise that each project relies on different methodologies to contribute to pro bono, be it by doing research and advocacy, providing clerical and administrative support at legal clinics or promoting legal awareness, among others. Members may even discover new projects they are passionate about!

Third, we are seeding a new project called Project ACDA (Automated Court Document Assembly). This started out as a project to develop a self-help guide for applicants for self-declared bankruptcy, but has since grown into an online survey platform, hosted by the Community Justice Centre, that generates affidavits required for litigants-in-person to apply for bankruptcy. In Semester 1, the project has expanded into developing the online system for uncontested deputyship applications. In Semester 2, we plan to engage members from the University Court Friends scheme to develop the platform for uncontested divorce applicants.

Highlights of Semester 1

For the first time, our members tried their hand at Soap for Hope™ to recycle old soap bars into new ones; distributing them provided us with an opportunity to engage migrant workers. This was delivered along with handouts that spoke about the Work Injury Compensation Act.

.Our LEAP volunteers who paid a visit to Thye Hua Kwan Family Service Centre were also featured as part of the second iteration of the NUS Day of Service (2017). We further challenged ourselves to extend the Pro Bono Awareness Week, hitherto an NUS law affair, to all other legal education institutions in Singapore viz. SMU Law, SUSS Law and Temasek Polytechnic. We hope our efforts will invigorate the student pro bono scene both within and without NUS Law.

To close the semester, a team of 12 embarked on an exchange trip to Hanoi branded 'ReVIETalize'. The NUS PBG team had the privilege of sharing the club's projects with students from Foreign Trade University, Hanoi Law University and the National Economics University, while also learning about the Vietnamese pro bono scene and the different legal issues prevalent there.

The Near Future

At the 6th Asian Pro Bono Conference on 2 October, the NUS PBG, together with the University of Malaya and University of Queensland, launched the Asia Pro Bono Law Students' Network. This network aims to provide a forum for law students to share initiatives and collaborate on projects. We are still in the midst of setting up the infrastructure and roadmap for the Network, but do stay tuned for the exciting things we have in store!

With our Project Development Initiative in swing, some of our members are working on a

new initiative to develop a legal awareness programme for halfway houses. If you are interested to get involved, or have a project idea you want to put into action, feel free to reach out to our Club Secretary at nusprobono@gmail.com.

Conclusion

Our community partners are deeply grateful for your time and enthusiasm. I urge all of you to continue serving your beneficiaries with purpose, professionalism and pride. Be alert to new ways in which the Club can serve our external partners and keep up the good work!

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the PBG Exco of 2016/17, specifically, Siddeeq, Carol and Janice for guiding us every step of the way as we took over office. The current Exco is grateful for all that you have done, and we are working hard to continue your amazing work. Next, I would like to thank our various beneficiaries and community partners who have been so kind in working with us and giving our students the opportunity to serve and learn. Lastly (and most importantly), I would like to thank our Faculty Advisor, Professor Helena Whalen-Bridge, for being a willing, able and available mentor who is always ready to offer her sage advice.

PBG, here's to another fruitful season of giving and striving to inform, to involve and to inspire!

Jonathan Tan

President

NUS Pro Bono Group

During the months of July to September, several Year 2 volunteers kickstarted the present cycle of LEAP by running a 10-week program at Thye Hua Kwan's Bukit Panjang Family Service Centre. The aim of these sessions was to deter youths from committing crimes, as well as raise awareness of victims' legal rights. Thus, the topics covered comprised issues such as cyberbullying, illegal gambling, outrage of modesty, substance abuse, illegal moneylending, as well as gang-related offences.

LEGAL EDUCATION & AWARENESS PROGRAMME (LEAP) @ THYE HUA KWAN

Given that the participants ranged from 10 to 18 years of age, each lesson was structured to be sufficiently complex and value-adding, yet digestible for all who participated. By the end of the session, most participants were able to give examples of their takeaways from the lesson, for instance knowing to contact the police or Family Service Centre if they faced abuse at home. Beyond delving into legal issues, our volunteers also sought to make a meaningful impact in the lives of the participants by forging deep relationships with them, and engaging in recreational activities such as educational games.

Following that, LEAP embarked on a program at the MINDS' Clementi Training & Development Centre, anchored by a group of Y1 and Y2 students. The 3-week program sought to supplement the participants' understanding of their legal rights, as well as teach them practical steps they could take to protect those rights.

Distilling legal concepts into simple rules, our volunteers engaged the participants with various games. Whilst the partnership with MINDS could still be regarded as being in its infancy, the LEAP team is excited to see how the program will evolve to better meet the needs of the community.

LEAP @ MINDS

LEAP @ UNITY

In October, a team comprised of mainly freshmen spearheaded a pilot session at Unity Secondary School. During the activity, the participants presented a brief slideshow about the law relating to substance abuse, and then broke the participants up into groups for meaningful discussion. This proved to be highly effective in engaging the participants, for the teachers praised the newly-minted freshmen members for their commendable effort.

LEAP is extremely grateful to our partner organizations for recognizing the need to set aside curriculum time to raise awareness about critical legal issues, as well as giving our volunteers the platform to give back over the years. The LEAP core team regards it a privilege to get to work with the ever passionate staff from Thye Hua Kwan, MINDS and Unity, and the team eagerly anticipates next year's line-up of events.

WONG
KAI
ZHOU

TAKING ADVOCACY TO GREATER HEIGHTS

READYING OUR YOUTHS FOR THE FUTURE

A year-long programme organized by the Ministry of Education, the Moot Parliament Programme (“MPP”) aims to educate upper secondary students from the Gifted Education and Integrated Programmes about Singapore’s democratic parliamentary system. It allows them to engage in role-play in a moot parliament setting whilst tackling difficult legal issues.

In the lead-up to the event, our students helped to anchor the training workshop. This included giving the younger students a crash course on the style of parliamentary debates and teaching them how to effectively channel their ideas. Running from October to August, the 2016/2017 run of the MPP drew to a close in August 2017. To conclude the programme, the much-anticipated mock parliamentary debates were hosted at Parliament House. The young mentees stepped up to the plate and delivered their bills and subsequently received constructive feedback from their peers and mentors alike.

In addition to this, the team helped to coordinate the MPP Forum on Active Citizenry, where guest speakers were invited to discuss the importance of community involvement. This semester, to mark the commencement the 2017/2018 cycle of the MPP, the MPP Symposium was held at the NUS Bukit Timah Campus on 28 October 2017. Targeted at Secondary 2 students who are interested to enrol into the program in 2018, the event featured distinguished speakers who spoke about a range of key issues in our present society. Our speakers included Mr Tan Teck Wang (General Counsel, Casino Regulatory Authority of Singapore), who discussed land acquisition policies in Singapore and Associate Professor Ramakrishna (Head of Policy Studies and Coordinator of the National Security Studies Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies), who educated the participants about the rise of terrorism in recent years, and the effectiveness of active citizenry as a solution to this problem. Looking to the coming semester, the Mentors’ Tea, held for participants of the 2018/2019 cycle in March, will mark the start of the 19th cycle of the MPP. There, our participants will get to meet with their expert-mentors and NUS/SMU student-mentors for the first time. The MPP team eagerly anticipates the productive discussion that is due to take place among the younger generation in the coming year.

JOAN CHEW

SOPHIA CRUISE

PROJECT X

THE WHY

BEHIND THE

The legal research team in the Pro Bono Group works closely with the community-based organisation Project X which seeks to empower sex workers through the provision of legal resources. Much of the work has thus been focused toward informing local sex workers of their legal rights and potential liabilities through educational workshops and role-plays conceptualised and executed by our students.

In the early parts of the academic year, students were involved in organising and providing support to sex worker-specific legal clinics. The team found that many of the sex workers were concerned about similar issues – in particular, solicitation and other criminal offences. In addition to that, students were tasked with research relating to pressing issues like the efficacy of the 'yellow-card' system which regulates sex work in Singapore.

The team also participated in Project X's inaugural Human Rights Defender's Program, which sought to empower sex workers who wish to meaningfully involve themselves in their community. The workshops, which were held over several weeks, touched on numerous issues including legal rights, human rights and health concerns. In preparation for this, members had to collate information on legal issues most usually faced by sex workers, including common offences gathered during the legal clinics such as theft, assault and procedures of arrest. This information was presented in pamphlet form for the participants' ease of reference, and the workshop was later held at the Project X headquarters on the 9th of November.

As the workshop was primarily centered around encouraging participants to become leaders within their community, time was devoted not only to ensuring that they were educated about the law, but also to discussing manners in which they can assist, which include the taking down of relevant information and providing of moral support for victims of legal abuse.

The team is incredibly grateful to Project X for allowing us the privilege to come on board their meaningful projects. As the project continues to develop, we hope that societal discrimination and stigmatisation of sex workers will dissipate with time.

PROJECT BOB

Project BOB is a new initiative that is presently in its second iteration. Notwithstanding that, its contribution to the migrant worker community so far has been significant. This year's theme for the workshops centered around responsible gambling. Taking place in late October, the workshop involved a seminar segment as well as a carnival segment. The carnival segment allowed workers to engage in activities where they had to take huge risks, in the hopes that each gamble would help them secure the eventual prize. This sought to help the workers understand the low probability of winning inherent in

such games in real life and reinforce their commitment to not gamble. Further, the project continues to conduct workshops with its other partner organizations, including the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics, Healthserve, as well as the Migrant Workers Centre, with a view to educate workers about their rights relating to their

employment, salary and welfare.

While the work that is done often does not guarantee an immediate, measurable impact, the team believes that in small ways, the project does indeed help to abate potential predicaments that such workers might face. In the coming months, the S4M team will remain committed to building up legal awareness among persons who have, in many ways, helped to build our nation.

**OW YING CHANG
& JEREMY CHU**

STUDENTS FOR MIGRANTS

BUILDING UP SINGAPORE'S BUILDERS

LAW + YOU

For Law & You, the students conducted legal workshops for foreign domestic workers. These took place at non-governmental organizations including the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics ("HOME"), the Foreign Domestic Worker

Association for Social Support and Training ("FAST"), the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People ("ACMI") and Aidha. The workshops compressed concepts about money, their physical and mental well-being, criminal behavior as well as negotiation skills into bite-sized fragments that were easily understood.

In October, Law & You celebrated Foreign Domestic Workers' Day in conjunction with FAST. For this year's program, the team set up henna and manicure booths, where students shared about their legal workshops while attending to the foreign domestic workers. The event reached to around 4,000 participants.

'Students for Migrants' ("S4M"), comprises two projects - each focusing on a different group of migrant workers: 'Law & You' focuses on engaging foreign domestic workers, while 'Project Being Our Brothers' ("Project BOB") reaches out to workers in the construction industry.

In the face of numerous complex legal issues including criminal, contractual and salary disputes, migrant workers are often prejudiced because of their lack of awareness and/or financial means to seek the appropriate redress.

Over the past semester, S4M has sought to strengthen its ties with its existing partners, whilst devising new ways to expand the outreach that the project currently enjoys.



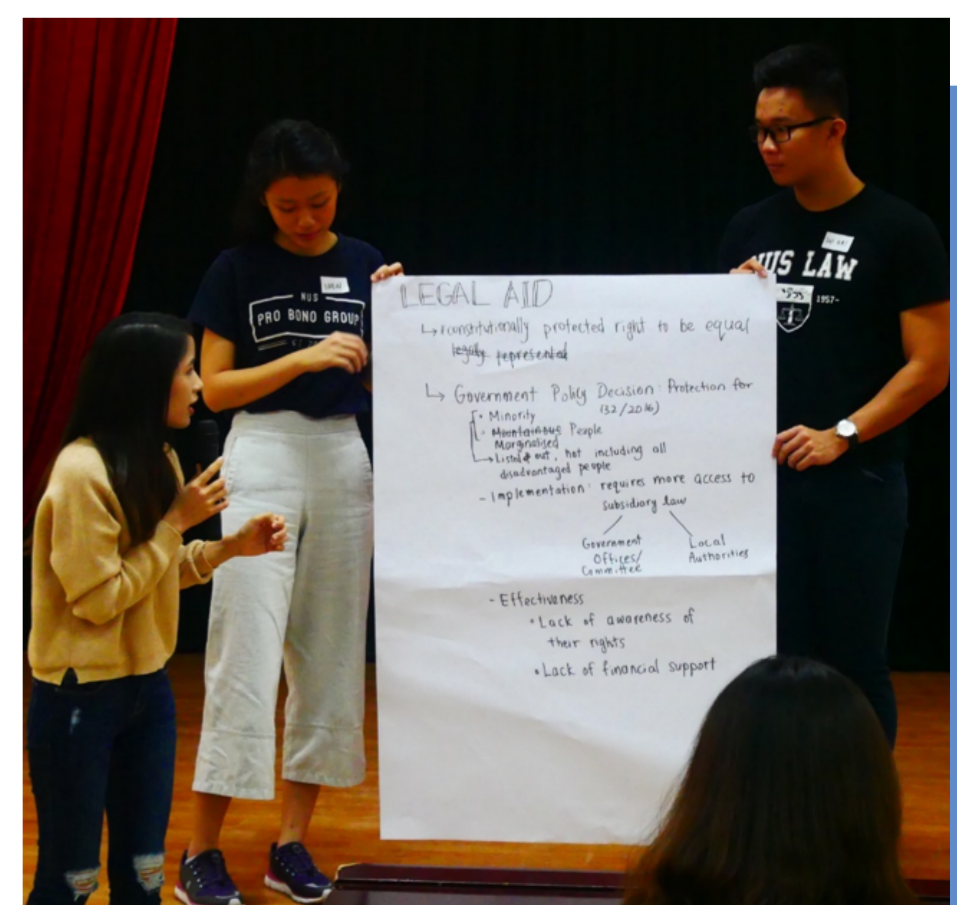
RE-VIETALIZE 2017

REVITALISING THE VIETNAMESE PRO-BONO LANDSCAPE

To wrap up the eventful semester, twelve members of the Pro Bono Group embarked on an inaugural exchange to Hanoi, Vietnam from 3 to 9 December 2017. The participants were kindly hosted by students from Foreign Trade University ("FTU"), Hanoi Law University ("HLU") and the National Economics University ("NEU"), many of whom were active members of their school's clinical legal education program ("CLE") which, inter alia, runs community-based initiatives to educate specific groups about their legal rights.

The team set out with three goals in mind: (1) to share about the student-driven pro bono culture and projects in NUS Law as an alternative to the current Vietnamese model of clinical legal education; (2) to encourage the Vietnamese to start their own projects; and (3) to find out more about the legal issues unique to Vietnam.

On the first day of the trip, the team engaged in an activity christened the "Game of Life" which sought to create an appreciation for the concept of privilege, and how it would often hinder the disadvantaged from accessing legal services. Above all, the game highlighted the underrated significance of pro bono efforts as envisioned by the students.



Thereafter, the local students engaged in discussion about what kind of new projects they wished to pursue in Vietnam. Our members had the privilege to sit in these discussions, and watch as the Vietnamese devised inter-university collaborative efforts. The key focus of Vietnamese encompassed the protection of women's rights among ethnic minority groups, in particular, the need to reach out to communities that are isolated in rural areas. The local students evinced a strong interest in organising village stays to enable participants to immerse themselves in the culture of the beneficiary's community, with an eye to help them identify legal issues affecting such communities and hence tailor their outreach to address these needs.



Later during the trip, the students visited the Action to the Community Development Centre ("ACDC"), a non-governmental organization providing legal services to people with disabilities. Key pillars of its outreach include guiding disabled persons through their applications for government aid, and a "telephone counselling" program that provided them with legal advice relating to matters like employment and housing.

Boasting a track record of successful efforts to advocate for legislative change that protects disabled persons, our

members were heartened by the receptive climate, which made it more conducive for student-led pro bono initiatives to flourish.

From the visit, our students took away that pro bono efforts can, and should go beyond purely legal aid – the ACDC's social work that it undertook in helping to identifying the relevant disability and the extent of it was critical to helping their beneficiary secure governmental assistance. For the Vietnamese students, the visit was valuable also because it bridged the gap between the potential volunteers and the organization – before the visit, the students had expressed that they had not even heard of the organization. As such, this laid the foundation for future partnerships that would too, go towards expanding the current effort by ACDC.



CONTINUED ON P10

The team also paid a visit to the office of NHQuang & Associates, a domestic public interest law firm, which likewise seeks to champion pro bono legal aid in Vietnam. Among its many beneficiaries, the firm supports small and medium enterprises (“SME”) and social enterprises. These include farmers looking to start a business and villages seeking to break into steel production. The firm is also active in policy advocacy, ranging from national issues to the regulation of the legal profession.

The team was struck by the commitment of the founder, Mr Nguyen Hung Quang, to legal aid, which extended to representing accused persons who had been charged with capital offences. Having travelled to other countries to conduct comparative studies about pro bono, the firm is also presently engaged in a 10-year petition seeking to procure an e-litigation system to boost transparency for civil matters, by easing the access to existing judicial precedent.



During the latter half of the trip, members also had the chance to sit in for a legal awareness workshop conducted by students from Foreign Trade University, which sought to educate students from ethnic minority groups about their rights under Vietnam’s child labour laws. Our team was also invited to briefly present about protection for child labourers under Singapore’s employment law.

To conclude the trip, the team, together with the Vietnamese students, set out detailed timelines and action plans to track the development of their projects.



NUS PRO BONO GROUP
To inform. To involve. To inspire.