

# Legal Aid of Cambodia

## Annual Report

Covering January to December 2017



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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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During 2017, the Legal Aid of Cambodia (LAC) has provided direct legal services to a wide array of groups, including children, indigenous communities, human rights defenders, and those in particularly vulnerable situations, among others. LAC also assisted in the establishment and strengthening of sub-national mechanisms, including community-based child protection mechanisms that involve child clubs and councils, closed groups of parents and caregivers, school support committees, Village Family Protection Networks, and various government entities. In addition, LAC trained and built the capacity of numerous stakeholders and mechanisms on human rights, protective standards and practices (e.g., child-friendly procedures), relevant laws, roles and mandates, reporting and referral mechanisms, and other services, including for the judicial police and commune legal advisors. Furthermore, LAC provided legal consultations and direct support to non-governmental and community-based organizations to ensure that they comply with the applicable laws.

Despite the financial and human resource difficulties, LAC contributed to the improvement of access to justice in Cambodia especially for those who are most marginalized, built the capacity of both duty-bearers and rights-holders, advocated for enhanced laws and systems, and raised awareness in multiple communities on legal rights and services. The support and efforts of diverse donors, dedicated staff, and other cooperative entities were essential in enabling LAC to continue providing important services at both the national and sub-national levels and to successfully implement the projects.

In 2018, LAC expects to continue working on projects focusing on child protection mechanisms, human rights defenders, land rights of indigenous communities, and legal compliance of non-governmental organizations, while also searching for additional opportunities to support children in conflict with the law, persons with disabilities, and women affected by gender-based violence, among other possible projects and grants that can support its core fund for providing legal aid. LAC will also persistently pursue its efforts to continue strategic advocacy, stakeholder engagement, capacity-building, and awareness-raising activities around the country.

We express our sincere gratitude to our donors, staff, and others who have supported the work of LAC in 2017 and hope to continue the collaboration and partnership. LAC remains committed to its mission of creating a just and fair Cambodian society, where everyone enjoys equal rights before the law.



Run Saray  
Executive Director,  
Legal Aid of Cambodia

## I. ABOUT LAC

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Founded in 1995, the Legal Aid of Cambodia (LAC) is a non-governmental legal aid organization operating in Cambodia. LAC's programs focus primarily on pro bono legal representation and support, awareness-raising and capacity-building, and advocacy. LAC provides legal representation to indigent parties to ensure that they do not experience mistreatment in the criminal justice system and/or prolonged or unlawful detention, and that they receive fair and expedient access to justice, including appeals. LAC also educates the youth and community members about their rights, the law, and other appropriate information when confronted by the criminal justice system, while building the capacity of various stakeholders to effectively perform their roles in a manner sensitive to the needs of the communities. In addition, LAC advocates for legal and judicial reform to ensure that sufficient protective measures and efficient processes are in place. LAC conducts workshops and discussions with legal practitioners, judges, and other stakeholders in order to identify concerns about the system, which are then used to advocate for meaningful reforms. Overall, LAC works on a wide range of human rights issues, and although its programs focus primarily on general legal aid, civil and political rights, children's rights, women's rights, and land and indigenous rights, the scope of its work expands into multiple sectors according to need.

During 2017, LAC employed 42 staff members, which varied over the year according to projects undertaken. It maintained offices in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Rattanakiri, and Steung Treng for the whole year and in Battambang for half of the year, while also providing services in Mondulakiri and other provinces.

## II. VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

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### Our Vision

To create a just and fair Cambodian society, where everyone enjoys equal rights before the law.

### Our Mission

To entrench the rule of law within the Cambodian legal system and ensure access to justice, respect for the law and human rights, and effective legal and judicial reforms, while providing pro bono legal assistance for the poor and most vulnerable, advocating for systemic change in partnership with communities, and building the capacities of various stakeholders.

### Our Values

- **Respect for the law and human rights:** We believe that justice is derived from the respect for the law, and our actions are guided by our commitment to human rights.
- **Responsibility to society:** We are dedicated to promoting access to legal aid services for the poor and those most vulnerable in our society.
- **Client-centered advocacy:** We consider the needs of our clients to be of paramount importance when planning and delivering our services to ensure that our resources are directed towards meeting individual and community needs in the most effective and efficient manner.
- **Professionalism:** We strive for levels of excellence that meet and exceed community expectations, and we hold ourselves accountable to the highest professional standards in legal service delivery and ethical practice.
- **Cooperation:** We actively encourage partnerships and positive engagement with various stakeholders to improve the quality of legal services and advocate for beneficial reform.

### III. PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

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#### A. General Legal Aid Program

LAC's General Legal Aid Program provides legal representation free of charge to Cambodia's poor wherever need arises and resources permit. Specialist projects are also housed within the program. This program has been the core of LAC's activities since its establishment in 1995.

**Program goal:** To improve the Cambodian court system and ensure justice for all parties before the courts.

**Specific objectives:**

- Ensure the underprivileged have access to justice by providing quality legal aid services including advocacy, and by identifying and raising issues of access to justice for all on the national platform.
- Promote human rights and the rule of law by training law enforcement officers and those involved in court and legal administration on legal and judicial procedures.
- Educate the community on the law and human rights, and participate in the education and training of law students.
- Improve the Cambodian legal system through advocacy and empowerment of the underprivileged to enable them to exercise their rights.

**Main activities:**

- LAC provides free, quality legal representation and consultation to detained parties. LAC staff assesses the needs of each client and provides representation when necessary for litigation, appeals of unlawful pre-trial detention procedures, and appeals of erroneous decisions and unlawful detention conditions.
- LAC advocates for reforms to the appeals process and court system. Given the current deficiencies in the appeals process, LAC seeks to stimulate changes to ensure that all parties have a fair opportunity to appeal decisions.
- LAC interviews detained parties, thereby effectively uncovering unlawful detention procedures and excessive detentions that clients may otherwise suffer without the resources to challenge.
- LAC helps unlawfully detained parties to appeal their sentences, advocating for the release of those who have been excessively detained through the relevant court procedures.
- LAC educates the community members on their rights. By training community members and local authorities regarding the rights of parties in the judicial process, LAC better ensures that the rights of individuals are protected by fellow members of the community and are less prone to violations by local authorities.

Despite the importance of the General Legal Aid Program that provides pro bono legal support to indigent clients on criminal and civil matters, it has been incredibly difficult to raise funds to support this program. The donors perceive that it is the obligation of the government to establish funds for providing legal aid to the poor, and thus prefer not to support external projects in this regard. Although the government has made efforts to establish a functioning legal aid system through the Ministry of Justice and the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia, they have been wholly insufficient to satisfy the demand. In this regard, LAC has been involved in multi-stakeholder conversations for the development of a national legal aid policy/law.

In terms of specific projects, given the difficulties in obtaining funding, LAC's General Legal Aid Program throughout 2017 only conducted two small short-term projects for particular target groups and a longer-term project exclusive to human rights defenders and civil society organizations (CSOs).

### ***Project 1: Access to legal aid for key populations in Cambodia***

This project was funded by USAID through FHI 360 for a period of ten months from January to October 2017 in order to support key populations (KPs) in Cambodia through legal representation and support, awareness-raising, and training of relevant stakeholders. Specifically, the activities focused on addressing the enabling environment and structural factors as they impact access to, and uptake of, HIV/AIDS and STI outreach and health services among the KPs, including entertainment workers (inclusive of sex workers), men who have sex with men, transgender persons, and people who inject drugs.

LAC also worked with its partners to find methods of mitigating the negative effects of current policies and legal barriers on the KPs, improve access to justice for the KPs, build capacity of the KP communities to engage in advocacy, and collect information on the KPs' experiences of structural and environmental factors impacting HIV services to inform strategies. An important step was to raise the awareness of relevant stakeholders in the legal system on the necessity of addressing these barriers and struggles faced by the KPs.

#### **Results:**

- 10 individuals in the KPs who had been abused, arrested, or detained received legal services.
- 9 coordination meetings were organized with prosecutors, judges, lawyers, community-based organizations (CBOs), and other stakeholders to advocate for more support to the KPs.
- 10 trainings were held for focal points and community leaders to become comfortable and capable in supporting their members in the case of arrest or detention.
- 15 community legal outreach sessions were conducted.
- 1 consultative meeting on legal service provision for the KPs was organized in Battambang.

#### **Challenges:**

- The small budget for this project limited the amount of legal services that LAC was able to provide to respond to the needs of the KPs, including for those in the most vulnerable situations that required further attention.
- Workshops and meetings that attempted to involve the participation of the police and military police were restricted by USAID.
- The police continued to unlawfully arrest drug users and send them directly to the drug centers without authorization from the prosecutor or court, leading to further complications in their access to justice.
- There was a general lack of collaboration from the police with regards to drug offenses.

### ***Project 2: Legal support for Thai nationals in prison in Cambodia***

This project was funded by the Thai Embassy for a period of eight months from March to October 2017 in order to provide limited legal support to Thai nationals who had been accused or convicted and imprisoned in Cambodia and to help prepare the necessary legal documents related to the transfer of prisoners or the reduction in sentences when appropriate. LAC provided direct support to Thai nationals facing dire circumstances and also provided consultations to the Thai Embassy. Given the relatively small scale of the grant and restricted mandate, there were limitations to the services that LAC was able to provide.

For reasons of confidentiality as agreed upon with the donor, specific project details and results have not been disclosed in this report.

### ***Project 3: Cambodian Civil Society Strengthening Project (CCSS)***

This project was funded by USAID through the East-West Management Institute (EWMI) for an expected period of nearly four years from August 2017 to March 2021, in order to (1) provide legal aid support, representation, and advocacy to human rights activists and (2) provide legal advice and support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CBOs on the Law on Associations and Non-governmental Organizations (LANGO), Labour Law, Taxation Law, and other laws related to CSOs, like laws on the National Social Security Fund and immigration for foreign employees.

The project under Category I sought to hold the Cambodian government accountable by enhancing access to justice for human rights activists who had been accused, charged, and/or convicted of being in conflict with the law. LAC undertook investigative processes that were thorough, objective, and effective, while advocating for and representing these individuals so that justice was enacted, administered, and enforced in an accessible, fair, and efficient manner.

The project under Category II supported pre-existing and prospective NGOs and CBOs in Cambodia by providing transactional legal counsel to bring the organizations into compliance with Cambodia's legal requirements, thus mitigating their business and organizational risks and growing their organizational capability. LAC provided advice, education, and training on legal matters relating to the day-to-day business operations of the organizations (e.g., labor requirements), as well as those relating to registration, suspension or cessation of operations, disclosure of information to the government, and other requirements as mandated under the law. A variety of mediums were utilized, including online and offline methodologies like in-person trainings and consultations, social media, radio talk shows, and distribution of leaflets and informational materials. LAC also offered services to represent organizations or their staff who came into conflict with these laws.

#### **Results:**

##### ***Category I***

- 4 lawyers entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with LAC, making up a pool of 6 lawyers available to assist in supporting human rights activists.
- 2 cases regarding the freedom of expression were represented and defended in the Kampong Speu Provincial Court and the Court of Appeal.

##### ***Category II***

- More than 340 NGOs received legal advice and information on the LANGO, Labour Law, Taxation Law, and other related laws and regulations.
- 4 new Cambodian NGOs received services to register their organizations.
- 5 foreign NGOs received services to renew their MoU with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
- 15 multi-stakeholder presentations were conducted to NGOs and CBOs at the provincial level to raise awareness of their legal obligations and the available legal services.

#### **Challenges:**

- There were many different laws and regulations that had to be researched, reviewed, and synthesized to ensure that CSOs received accurate and understandable information and advice. This information also had to be continuously revisited with the changing legal landscape.
- There were many gray areas in the law, which limited the ability to provide accurate and comprehensive consultations.
- There was a lack of cooperation from the concerned line ministries.

## **B. Child Justice Program**

Established in 1997, LAC's Child Justice Program provides support to both children in conflict with the law and child victims of crime. The Child Justice Program works to protect the rights of children, both under the laws of Cambodia and also through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Program goals:** To promote and improve children's rights throughout the justice system in order to ensure safeguards for children in conflict with the law and child victims, including the institution of protective child-friendly standards and an adherence to the relevant rules and regulations for investigations, proceedings, detention, and other aspects of the system.

### **Main activities:**

- LAC improves protection for children in conflict with the law at each stage of the judicial process and influences the practices of the different stakeholders who interact with children during the process, including police officers, judicial officers, prosecutors, judges, prison officials, prison guards, and local government officials. This includes expanding their adherence to best practices in child protection, while building their capacity to pursue diversion and alternative measures instead of detention.
- LAC coordinates and communicates with key stakeholders to support children in conflict with the law, primarily geared towards protecting their best interests and reducing violence against children. The focus is placed on sustainable impact on the system and stakeholders.
- LAC provides free legal representation to children in conflict with the law. LAC works to ensure that the children:
  - Are interviewed by the police in the presence of an interested adult, which may be a parent, guardian, lawyer, or another individual.
  - Are not subject to physical or emotional abuse either by the police or corrections officers.
  - Are not subject to excessive pre-trial detention when used as a measure of last resort.
  - Are able to receive a fair trial.
  - Are able to pursue diversion or a non-custodial sentence.
  - Are offered life-skills training and material support while in detention.
  - Are able to be reintegrated into society upon release from detention.
- LAC strengthens the political commitment to institute child protection measures and to develop effective laws and policies on juvenile justice and child rights, in particular securing the passing into law of the draft Juvenile Justice Law.

LAC played a strong role in the enactment of the Juvenile Justice Law in 2016 and continues to collaborate with the government and UNICEF to structure the framework and implement particular provisions of the law. A focus has been to pursue non-custodial measures and alternative sentencing schemes, including diversion. LAC has participated in the development of standards and guidelines in this respect. It has also worked with partners to establish child-friendly chambers in the courts, given that Cambodia does not have separate juvenile courts.

Child victims often struggle to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice due to a combination of cultural and social attitudes towards violence against women and children, a culture of impunity, unfair legal and judicial processes, and a lack of governmental assistance to victims in this field. LAC has contributed to tackling this attitude by strengthening systems and networks and raising awareness, in collaboration with various stakeholders and partners.

LAC's Child Justice Program conducted two main projects in 2017 to establish and strengthen the community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPMs) around the country.

## ***Project 1: Strengthening the Child Protection Mechanism in Rattanakiri and Steung Treng Provinces***

This project was funded by Plan International for a period of one year and a half from August 2016 to January 2018 in the provinces of Rattanakiri and Steung Treng, in order to establish and strengthen the multi-level CBCPMs, build the capacity of children and stakeholders in the system, and raise the awareness of the community on children's rights. Although this project was initially expected to last for three years until June 2019, it was discontinued in January 2018 due to the funding situation of the donor.

The project specifically worked with child clubs, closed groups of parents and caregivers, Village Family Protection Networks (VFPNs), and government entities, including Provincial Women's and Children's Consultative Committees (PWCCCs), District Women's and Children's Consultative Committees (DWCCCs), and Commune Committees on Women and Children (CCWCs). The project supported their meetings and built their capacities to prevent and respond to violence against children, while enabling children to participate in decision-making and advocacy meetings at the national and sub-national levels.

### **Results:**

- 16 new child clubs were established at the commune levels and 80 meetings were supported to build the clubs' capacities on children's rights, child participation, roles and mandates, communication and negotiation, and other issues. The meetings involved over 1,600 children, with near gender parity (normally more girls).
- 28 trainings were held for child club members on children's rights, reporting mechanisms, and related laws, in collaboration with the CCWCs. The trainings involved around 550 children.
- 72 peer-to-peer education sessions of the child club members were supported to enable children to teach and mentor one another on relevant issues. The sessions involved over 1,300 children.
- 80 children were supported to visit police stations to better understand the system, encourage community-building, and promote child-sensitive practices to the police; 69 children were supported to attend the CCWC, DWCCC, and PWCCC meetings to raise their concerns about violence against children and domestic violence; and a large number of children were supported to participate in the international children's day events at the provincial and district levels.
- 10 new closed groups were established and 99 meetings were supported to build their capacity on non-violent parenting and life skills, foster positive behaviors and attitudes, and devise solutions to family problems to reduce violence. The meetings involved over 1,000 adults, with near gender parity. 20 home visits were conducted for the group members in collaboration with the CCWCs.
- 15 new VFPNs were established and 157 meetings were supported to strengthen the networks' structures and reporting mechanisms, leading to an enhanced response to reports of violence against children. The meetings involved over 1,200 people, including children.
- 42 meetings of the PWCCCs, DWCCCs, CCWCs, and the provincial-level Cambodian National Council for Children were supported to strengthen their response mechanism.
- 19 community awareness-raising sessions were conducted with around 850 participants.

### **Challenges:**

- Funding difficulties had led to the premature discontinuance of the project, and thus not all of the project objectives were satisfied.
- The 2017 commune elections held in the summer affected the CCWCs, including their composition and function, which hindered the project's implementation.
- Extreme weathers, such as heavy flooding, made certain remote areas difficult to reach, which led to delays in scheduled meetings and project implementation.
- There were oral and written language and communication barriers with the indigenous communities and local authorities who did not have a fluent command of Khmer.



## ***Project 2: Reducing Child Poverty through Promoting Child's Active Citizenship***

This project was funded by Sida through Plan International for an expected period of three years and a half from January 2015 to June 2018 in the Siem Reap Province, in order to strengthen the CBCPMs (e.g., VFPNs), enhance the functionality of government entities and the working group on violence against children, and provide training to the villagers and different entities on the child protection system and children's rights.

The project supported the meetings of the government, including relevant criminal justice stakeholders and the PWCCs, DWCCCs, and CCWCs; of the community groups, including child clubs and parental groups; and of the school groups, including child councils and school support committees. The project also supported preventive activities led by the government or children, while building the capacity of beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders on child-friendly procedures, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, violence against children, intervention and referral tactics, and reporting and responding mechanisms. The project also supported the development and implementation of the child-friendly police procedures and commune legal advisors model, including capacity-building activities.

### **Results:**

- The VFPN model was recognized and considered by the district and provincial authorities to be integrated into the government's village safety committees.
- 96 groups of VFPNs, parent groups, school support committees, and children's councils were actively involved to prevent, intervene, and make referrals on violence against children issues in the community and lower secondary school settings.
- 20 school support committee members and teachers built their capacity to prevent, protect against, and make referrals for cases of violence against children, and they enhanced their understanding of child participation, children's rights, risk management, and preparation for natural disasters.
- 20 children's councils in schools were functional and were able to conduct prevention activities and referrals to the school support committees and VFPNs when necessary.
- At least 20 children aged between 6 and 17 (50% girls), including the most marginalized children, effectively expressed their ideas and actively advocated for government accountability in protecting children's rights. Other children through their child and youth networks and forums also participated as key agents in decision-making processes at the national and sub-national levels, in collaboration with the Child Rights Coalition Cambodia.
- 2 trainings were held for the judicial police on the child-friendly police procedures, involving 58 officers. 2 trainings were held for commune legal advisors on their roles and mandates and the applicable laws, involving 44 CCWC and Commune Council members, with near gender parity.
- The provincial working group on violence against children expanded their membership to other CSOs, broadening its advocacy efforts to strengthen protective measures for children.
- At least 70% of the target community members indicated an enhanced capacity to collaborate in preventing and protecting against violence against children, especially through the referral mechanism.

### **Challenges:**

- The differing levels of knowledge among the community members made training and awareness-raising efforts difficult.
- LAC faced difficulty in providing referral services to child victims and children in conflict with the law. LAC had identified and worked with two different mechanisms with government bodies and NGOs, including the provincial departments, police commissariats, and courts, but the coordination was weak to provide adequate services to the child victims and children in conflict with the law.

## C. Women's Justice Program

LAC's Women's Justice Program provides legal representation for both women in conflict with the law and female survivors/victims of crime (particularly domestic violence and sexual crimes) to ensure that they can receive justice from the courts by holding the alleged perpetrator accountable and by receiving civil compensation, including the use of alternative dispute resolution. The Women's Justice Program also provides community education about the rights of women, advocates for the protection of women's rights, and campaigns against domestic violence, while training the police, courts, and prison officials as to the rights of women who enter the judicial system.

**Program goals:** To enhance access to justice for women by providing legal aid to women in vulnerable situations (e.g., legal representation for both women in conflict with the law and female survivors/victims), educating communities on women's rights, training government authorities on the proper implementation of women-related laws, and pursuing strategic advocacy on various issues to enhance the protection of women's rights.

### **Main activities:**

- LAC provides legal representation for women accused of crimes, ensuring that they receive a fair trial and are not subject to unlawful arrest or detention. LAC also works to improve the treatment of female pre-trial detainees.
- LAC strives to reduce the amount of pre-trial detention and expand pardon or parole for incarcerated women.
- LAC provides trainings to the police, courts, and prison officials on the rights of women, while working with the Ministry of Justice and the courts to establish procedures for non-custodial sentences for minor crimes.
- LAC assists female survivors/victims to press charges against their assailant and pursue civil compensation through the court system or alternative dispute resolution, despite the culture of impunity and the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual crimes.
- LAC conducts community education on the rights of women to be free from violence and coordinates meetings among relevant stakeholders to reduce the incidence of domestic violence.
- LAC assists women in pursuing divorce in order to escape abusive relationships, while advocating for streamlined procedures.

Other than constant advocacy efforts and engagement in multi-stakeholder platforms and discussions, LAC's Women's Justice Program did not conduct any specific projects in 2017 due to a lack of funding. LAC has submitted proposals to the United Nations Trust Fund and to the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, with the results to be released in March 2018. The call for proposal for the project entitled "Stop Violence against Women and People with Disability", funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was delayed until further notice.

## D. Land Law and Natural Resources Program

LAC's Land Law and Natural Resources Program works to protect the rights and interests of poor landholders in land disputes primarily associated with the granting of economic land concessions by the Cambodian government. Since 2012, LAC has been broadening its focus to also consider cases involving environmental law and the misuse of natural resources, including forests, rivers, and fisheries.

Establishing and legally protecting property rights is a significant issue in Cambodia. The situation stems from the abolition of private property during the Khmer Rouge regime and the subsequent destruction of

property records and the displacement of people from their traditional land, both under the Khmer Rouge and the preceding civil war period. Cambodia has actively sought to develop its land through the granting of economic land concessions, but given the uncertainties over property titles, this often leads to disputes over ownership, generally between wealthy investors and poor subsistence farming communities.

**Program goals:** To ensure the protection of land rights, especially for disadvantaged people and indigenous groups, through legal recourse, alternative dispute resolution, advocacy, and empowerment.

**Main activities:**

- LAC provides legal representation, advice, and information to disadvantaged groups and people whose land rights have been affected. These cases are mainly categorized into two types: (1) high profile cases that involve land disputes between powerful, wealthy persons and poor communities, and (2) cases that involve criminalization of disadvantaged communities on charges such as trespassing or illegal destruction of property.
- LAC assists communities and individuals to pursue mediation as an option for obtaining redress for any damage caused to their land.
- LAC raises awareness in the communities and empowers indigenous groups to advocate for their rights.

LAC's Land Law and Natural Resources Program conducted only one project in 2017, especially given the difficulty involved in raising funds for land issues, which are considered to be very sensitive. However, the prospects for 2018 are more positive.

***Project 1: Empowerment of indigenous communities in Busra Commune, Mondulkiri Province***

This project was funded by the Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG) for an expected period of six months from October 2017 to April 2018, in order to provide legal advice, training, and other support to indigenous communities in the Busra Commune of Mondulkiri Province to enable them to participate in mediation processes for their land disputes with a private company that received an economic land concession.

The project sought to improve the understanding and skills of indigenous people's organizations in using the transitional, non-judicial grievance mechanisms, thereby supporting the affected communities to obtain redress. The purpose was to enable the community representatives and members to better advocate on behalf of themselves to protect their land rights and secure relief for the harm done to their livelihood. The project assisted the indigenous communities in the Busra Commune to enter into a comprehensive agreement with the relevant company.

LAC's role was to serve as a community advisor to support the affected communities by providing legal assistance and information, helping them to determine their options, preparing them for mediation with the company, providing trainings on land rights, and advising the community representatives throughout their negotiation sessions with the company.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic and the ongoing status of the negotiations, and for reasons of confidentiality as agreed upon with the beneficiaries, specific project details and results have not been disclosed in this report.

## IV. FUNDING AND DONORS

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LAC continued to face significant financial difficulties during year 2017, though not as serious as the preceding year. The second half of the year was especially difficult for the General Legal Aid Program, as several donors concluded their grant period. With the difficulty in securing additional sources of funding throughout the year, LAC had to dismiss several staff members, albeit a smaller downsizing than the previous year, and it had to close its Battambang office. LAC persistently sought diverse funding opportunities to fill the gaps in operation for the second half of the year.

There was limited success in securing additional funds to continue certain core programs of LAC, especially the Women’s Justice Program, which left the organization in an unstable state as it entered year 2018. Partnerships are built wherever possible to enable cost-efficiency of project implementation, and LAC attempts to minimize expenses wherever possible to maximize its assistance to the beneficiaries, incorporating the lessons learnt into future budgeting processes.

The following table presents LAC’s donors that provided grants in 2017 and the durations of the projects that were funded:

Donors	Projects	Project Period
FHI 360 (USAID)	Access to legal aid for key populations in Cambodia	January – October 2017
Thai Embassy	Legal support for Thai nationals in prison in Cambodia	March – October 2017
EWMI (USAID)	Cambodian Civil Society Strengthening Project	August 2017 – March 2021*
Plan International	Strengthening the Child Protection Mechanism in Rattanakiri and Steung Treng Provinces	August 2016 – January 2018
Plan International (Sida)	Reducing Child Poverty through Promoting Child’s Active Citizenship	January 2015 – June 2018*
MRLG	Empowerment of indigenous communities in Busra Commune, Monduliri Province	October 2017 – April 2018*

\* Note that these are expected end dates that may either be extended or discontinued prematurely.

## V. HUMAN RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE

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### Staff Movement and Capacity-Building

As a result of funding difficulties, two permanent staff members and other project staff members were dismissed during the year, while five additional staff resigned to take on other opportunities in the face of financial insecurity. LAC focused on providing capacity-building opportunities for its remaining staff, including financial management forums by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia for the finance manager, the land forum in Bangkok by the Food and Agriculture Organization for the executive director, and a tax training by Planète Urgence for all LAC staff. LAC strives to create a working environment that is flexible and congenial, so as to ensure that the staff can continue to make an impact on society without facing internal conflicts within the organization.

## Board and Management Team Meetings

Board and management team meetings are an important aspect of LAC's good governance policy. Based on LAC's Statute, board meetings shall be held twice a year, and the executive director is required to submit an update report and financial report every quarter. The first board meeting in 2017 was conducted in July, and though the second meeting was planned to be held in December, it was delayed to January 2018 due to scheduling conflicts of the board members.

LAC's management team consists of the executive director, finance manager, administrative and human resources manager, and other program managers. The team is responsible for LAC's management, good governance, program strategies, and other internal issues related to the organization. This also includes overseeing the organization's adherence to its statute, internal regulations, and various policies (i.e., gender, child protection, finances, case intake, and media). The management team meetings are normally held bimonthly, chaired on a rotational basis. During the reporting period, LAC conducted four management team meetings, discussing internal issues, project issues, governance issues, management improvements, and action points that required attention.

### *Supervisory Board Members*

Name	Board Position	Paid / Volunteer
1. Ms. Chim Manavy <i>Executive Director, Open Institute</i> Mobile: +855 12 964 286 E-mail: <a href="mailto:ma@open.org.kh">ma@open.org.kh</a>	Chair	Volunteer
2. Mr. Touch Bora <i>Private Lawyer</i> Telephone: +61 2 9310 7290 E-mail: <a href="mailto:bora.touch@legalaid.nsw.gov.au">bora.touch@legalaid.nsw.gov.au</a>	Vice-chair	Volunteer
3. Mr. Sun Channdara Wuddh <i>Executive Director CTC, Professor at RULE, Attorney of Law</i> Mobile: +855 11 777 777 E-mail: <a href="mailto:wuddh.win@gmail.com">wuddh.win@gmail.com</a>	Member	Volunteer
4. Mr. Nicholas Rine <i>Clinical Professor, University of Michigan Law School</i> Mobile: +1 734 358 0398 E-mail: <a href="mailto:nickrine@umich.edu">nickrine@umich.edu</a>	Member	Volunteer
5. Vacant	To be recruited	

## Financial Audit

An independent and certified auditor, PAT Professional Limited, conducted a preliminary audit of LAC's financial transaction for the first half of 2017 in July, both for the projects and for the organization as a whole. An annual audit for 2017 was delayed due to financial difficulties, but was planned to be conducted in 2018. LAC takes these audits very seriously, as they serve as important tools for LAC to measure the organization's competence in financial management. The reports provide LAC with guidance on the areas of improvement, while also verifying the good governance and financial transparency of the organization to prove the absence of fraud or corruption. LAC periodically submits the audit reports to its current donors, as well as to potential donors when applying for grant funding.

## Volunteers

Volunteers have provided valuable support to LAC over the years, assisting project lawyers to research laws, conduct legal analyses, edit reports, and draft proposals. In return, LAC arranges for them to visit project activities in the field, observe case hearings in court, and attend workshops and other public forums. LAC considers internships to be an important method of training the next generations of lawyers, and thus attempts to provide a substantive learning experience.

### *International volunteers*

During the reporting period, LAC supervised five foreign interns from law schools and universities in Australia, the United States, and Canada. The internships generally lasted from eight to ten weeks during the summer. Interns worked on different projects according to the needs of the attorney and program managers, ranging vastly in the topics covered and skills utilized.

### *Local volunteers*

During the reporting period, LAC supervised four interns from universities in Cambodia, split evenly between the head office in Phnom Penh and the branch office in Siem Reap. The duration for the local interns lasted six months.

## VI. PHOTOS

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***Land Law and Natural Resources Program:***  
*Providing trainings to indigenous communities in Mondulhiri Province*



*Child Justice Program: Conducting meetings with various stakeholders to improve child protection mechanisms and child-friendly access to justice for children*