

2010-2011 Luce Scholars, who arrived in their countries of placement in early July 2010, share their experiences in Asia:

**C**HINA is the most engrossing mystery I have ever encountered. Its development arguably represents the most important political, economic, and environmental change of the 21st century, but the country is incomprehensible to all those lacking the historical, linguistic, and sociocultural knowledge to penetrate it. I am still more of an observer here than a doer, more a learner than an instructor, but I can think of no more opportune or important location to observe and learn. My main preoccupation has been grappling with the profound transitions underway in the country: the expansion of its economy, the growing wealth and education of its population, the adjustment of its political system to these destabilizing forces, and the evolving identity of its citizenry as their world is remade before



their eyes. At my placement in the capital with the Chinese non-governmental organization *Global Village of Beijing*, I participate in efforts to promote environmental awareness amongst the Chinese populace and to develop more sustainable models of development. Living for extended periods at the NGO's remote project-sites, I document in photographs and video the interconnected yet starkly different lifestyles experienced by the rural population in these places. And outside of work – whether visiting the Inner Mongolian steppe, watching the Miss Laowai beauty pageant, or attending a TEDx conference on innovation – I absorb the country's social transformation, as its people contend with new identities and desires.

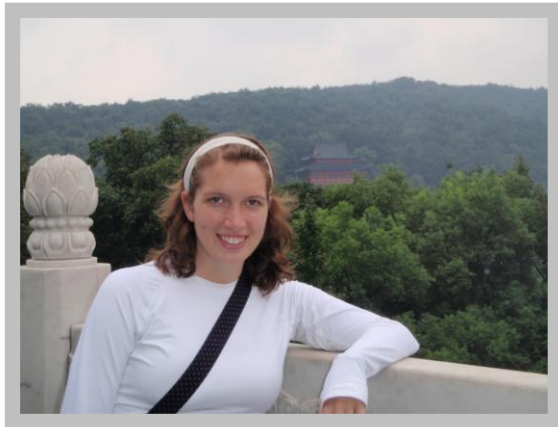
– **Ted Alcorn, Beijing, China**

**A**FTER trying yoga twice in high school, I have since despised almost everything about it. Despite this long-lived loathing, I decided to try yoga again in Taiwan. I am the class' only male, its only non-Taiwanese member, and its only member who hates yoga. As time goes on, though, I find that both my yoga outlook and the carbonated tension in my left hamstring are relaxing as I dip into a distorted down dog. Yoga now seems like a great book that had a rather slow beginning. When I started doing yoga, I looked at it as part of my job: not my job at the Center for



Educational Research and Evaluation, but my job as a Luce Scholar – which, as I see it, is to try new things, or retry old things in a new way. That approach has led me to train with the Taiwanese national championship college basketball team, play weekly badminton with Education Ministry officials, write music in Mandarin, and analyze an education system from which America has much to learn. I spend most of my time observing in Taiwanese schools, assessing differences between Western and Eastern approaches in order to conceptualize a happy medium. My Luce experience has been educational in every sense of the word, especially learning traditional Mandarin characters – 700 down, only 60,000 to go!

– **Alex Baron, Taipei, Taiwan**



I'M spending my Luce year in Shanghai at Fudan University's Institute of Developmental Biology and Molecular Medicine, which seeks to explore the molecular mechanism of disease, primarily using the mouse as a model organism. I came to China to experience first-hand one of the fastest growing scientific communities in the world. I wanted to explore how science and bioethics are practiced in Chinese Academia and how professors and students form scientific questions and design ways to pursue them. As a member of the lab, I participate in lab meetings and

journal clubs and also help my colleagues prepare manuscripts and applications for submission. Individually, I'm pursuing an independent research project that aims to investigate changes in metabolism during and after pregnancy. The project measures changes in body composition and attempts to document, for the first time, how breastfeeding influences weight loss after pregnancy. Outside of the lab, highlights include exploring Shanghai's bustling restaurant scene, catching a hip-hop or cycling class at my local gym (insanely fun since my fellow classmates are usually middle-age Shanghainese!), and realizing that my Mandarin is actually better than it was the week before!

– **Blair Benham-Pyle, Shanghai, China**

AFTER two months of marathon Mandarin lessons in Beijing –and weekend trips to Xi'an and Shanghai – I moved to Hong Kong to begin work at the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and Asian Legal Resource Center (ALRC). At AHRC, I research and write on political and legal systems in developing countries throughout Asia. These articles draw international attention to individual cases as well as broader efforts to end human rights abuses in Asia. Articles and statements I have written for AHRC have been republished in Cambodia, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka as well as cited by the *New York Times*. Our work publicizing government failures channels information and analysis to NGOs and state actors, foments debate, and increases pressure on offending governments to reform policies and redress deficiencies and violations. One article criticizing overseas labor policies provoked a formal response from the Taiwanese government, while another sparked a debate with a South Asian academic living in Canada in the pages of one of Sri Lanka's national



newspapers. This spring, an essay I co-authored on Sri Lanka's 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment will appear in the ALRC's legal journal, *Article 2*. Long-term research projects include a Constitutional history of Sri Lanka and a book detailing ten torture case studies in the context of international human rights agreements based on interviews and in-country research. Work has inspired and facilitated travel in the countries I research, including China, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, and will also take me to Sri Lanka. Each day at AHRG and ALRC brings new challenges, but

invariably also offers significant opportunities to contribute to human rights advocacy across Asia, as well as giving me new ways to think about government, politics, and law.

Life in Hong Kong is richer and more interesting than I had imagined—and my expectations were high. Each morning, I walk through the dried seafood district in Sheung Wan, eyeing the cases of live, bound crabs and trying to identify the seaweed, mollusks, crustaceans, and fish drying in neat heaps in the sun. When I emerge from the MTR onto the street in Mong Kok, the abrupt loss of personal space and presence of myriad stalls selling everything from fruit to long underwear reminds that I work in the most densely populated area in the world. In the evening, I meet friends at a local *dai pai dong* for Cantonese food or come home to a vibrant neighborhood filled with reminders of the proximity and influence of other countries in the region—shops selling curry, pho, and noodles nestle side-by-side with Malay cuisine and sushi bars. Each evening, I watch ferries and helicopters on their way to and from Macau from my apartment on the edge of Victoria Harbor and savor the iconic panorama of the Hong Kong skyline.

– **Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza**, Hong Kong, China

**T**HE forecast next week calls for sunny skies and temperatures down to -38 °C (-36 °F). This is nothing unusual here in Ulaanbaatar, the coldest capital city in the world – and my newfound home. I work at the Public Health Institute, part of the government's Ministry of Health. Although it took some time to find my footing, I am now working on no fewer than three separate projects. My primary research thrust is addressing Mongolia's catastrophic levels of hepatitis and end-stage liver cancer. It has been a rewarding experience and I am sorely



tempted to stay here beyond the Luce year. Outside of work, I've had a bevy of experiences in this wonderful country:

- Coming to adore Mongolian food – salty milk tea and fried mutton dumplings
- Butchering the language – suffixes will be the end of me! Take the word *хадмынхтайгаа*, which actually is just four suffixes attached to the word for “in-laws” (*хадм ын х тай гаа*)
- Countryside travels – breathtaking landscape (steppe, desert, forest, mountains, eternal blue sky), 43 million head of livestock (horses, sheep, goats, camels), welcoming nomads
- Soccer and skiing with locals

I am eager to see what the next six months hold, though I already know I will be sad when this Luce year comes to a close. Tsagaan Sar (*Цагаан сар*, White Month) – the Mongolian lunar New Year celebration and a major holiday – is rapidly approaching, and I have been invited over to my close friend's house to celebrate with her family. I cherish every opportunity to witness these strong, bighearted, and beautiful people in their element.

#### – **Jesse Burk-Rafel**, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



I AM currently working at Chulalongkorn University Hospital in a Neurovirology laboratory designated as the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Research and Training on Viral Zoonoses. My project is to develop molecular diagnostics for viral encephalitis, a neurological disorder that can be caused by dozens of different viruses. These diagnostics will later be used for epidemiology studies and integrated into the hospital's diagnostic unit. Once a week, I also shadow Neurology and Infectious

Disease doctors in the hospital. Additionally, I have assisted in sample collection for bat virus surveillance studies in rural provinces, and traveled to Cambodia to volunteer at a free orthopedic surgery NGO. My professors are highly regarded internationally and in the WHO, and I am lucky to have formed close relationships and shared many dinner conversations with them. A year ago, I aspired to apply inexpensive medical technologies for global health in developing regions of Southeast Asia, but had no significant experiences outside of the USA. Today, I have gained the interdisciplinary perspective and connections that I need to achieve this goal in the future. Outside of work, I enjoy visiting the host family I spent my first two months in Thailand with, running in the parks, and eating \$1 meals on the street.

#### – **Henry Cheng**, Bangkok, Thailand

**S**INCE arriving in Shanghai, I've had the opportunity to gain insight into the confusing and often messy world that is the Chinese nonprofit sector. Through my placement at the Non Profit Incubator (NPI), I've interacted with a diverse range of organizations and learned an immense amount from conversations with my colleagues. Increasingly, my core focus has been on the emergent field of social enterprise. I have assisted several colleagues with the design and launch of a social entrepreneur institute. For the project, I was given the freedom to dive into the social enterprise scene in China.



As a result, I've interviewed and met with some fascinating people, including investors at social venture capital firms and young social entrepreneurs from both China and abroad. Additionally, my work with the Shanghai United Foundation, yet another young initiative of NPI, has exposed me to the severe lack of funding and access to resources that constrain the growth of grassroots NGOs here.

Some in China have called 2010 "the year of philanthropy." Regardless of whether this bold claim is true, it's certainly been a learning process; I often find myself lost in translation or working to untangle fundamental differences in the Chinese approach to philanthropy. I do believe the Chinese nonprofit world is in the midst of a transformational moment, and so I feel incredibly lucky to have the chance to dive head first into this rapidly evolving space. Outside the office, I've enjoyed the wonderfully hilarious process of utilizing my inadequate Mandarin to teach a local colleague Spanish. We may end up laughing half the lesson, but my weekly meetings with Ye Ying, who adores "Cien Años de Soledad," are always insightful and offer a refreshingly different perspective on everything from pop culture to the pressures and tensions Chinese young professionals face.

– **Colin Felsman**, Shanghai, China



**I** AM spending my Luce year in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, where I work for Centre of Live & Learn for Environment and Community, an organization dedicated to environmental education and sustainable community development. As the environmental education officer, I am responsible for developing green industry guides and climate change education materials, including a booklet for the public and a curriculum guide with climate change lesson plans and activities for Viet Nam schools. Working at Live & Learn has

allowed me to meet and interact with youths from all over Viet Nam, explore environmental and sustainable development issues in a developing country, and attend conferences, lectures, and workshops. However, the best part of my work experience hasn't come from the work itself but from getting to know my co-workers. The weekly cooking lessons during lunch, afternoon walks along Ho Tay, and discussions about everything from photography and war to the making of shrimp paste and Vietnamese weddings have helped make Ha Noi feel more like home and my co-workers seem more like family. Outside of work, you can find me navigating Ha Noi traffic (and thunderstorms) on my motorbike, practicing my virabhadrasana poses in yoga class, catching up with friends at a local bia hoi corner, or searching for the elusive Rafetus Swinhoei in Hoan Kiem lake.

– **Lynsey Gaudioso, Hanoi, Vietnam**



**C**OOKING frogs, harvesting rice, planting vegetables - all in a day's work at the Energy Ashram in Khao Yai, Thailand where I am spending my Luce year. I came to the Ashram to learn about bioenergy, but I've ended up learning how to make sugar from sugarcane, cook Thai cuisine, and train newborn puppies too! I have also discovered that I am terrible at learning languages, so I try to find crafty ways to make jokes in "Thaenglish" with my Thai co-workers; most of the time, I'm the only one

laughing but it helps with the language learning process for both me and my co-workers as I explain the jokes. Living and working in a commune has left plenty of time for introspection and an interesting break from the fast-paced lifestyle in the United States. Plus, if the U.S. economy never recovers, the ashram has taught me how to make an organic spa from Thai herbs and I am certified in Thai massage from a local temple - perhaps I'll be open for business in 2012!

– **Michelle Henry, Khao Yai, Thailand**

**I** AM spending my Luce year in Jakarta as a researcher for the Indonesian Center for the Study of Law and Policy (PSHK). So far, I have supported the drafting, implementation, and mapping of national laws and policies, including: a public health law concerning breast-feeding and milk formula advertising; an immigration bill that will redefine the concept of permanent residency; and the mapping of the national legal framework for child protection services. PSHK's work seems very relevant to national policymakers, and is quite interesting to me, but my intermediate language skills are currently insufficient to really dig into

legal/policy work on a professional level. This said, Bahasa Indonesia is much more accessible than some of the languages that my fellow Lucers must use. Life outside of work has proven to be just as diverse and substantial – my appetite for music has been well fed by traditional gamelan performances and a lively independent music scene, the flames of my addiction to piquant foods have been stoked by Indonesian chefs’ strong emphasis on cabe (hot peppers), and new friends and friendly colleagues have provided cultural grist as I have tried to process each new experience. My visit to Mount Bromo—a volcano surrounded by a lunar-looking sand sea within a larger volcano—was particularly awe-inspiring as I watched a sunrise that reminded me of the northern lights I watched as a child.

– **Paul Kellner, Jakarta, Indonesia**



I'M a visiting scholar at the University of Tokyo's Department of Global Health Policy, where I am studying the Japanese healthcare system, the challenges Japan faces in maintaining universal healthcare coverage, and the ways in which Japan's experience can be utilized effectively to help other countries achieve universal coverage. By 2030, most countries



around the world will have to deal with the challenges of aging populations. As the world's most rapidly aging society, Japan will have to confront these challenges first, and all eyes will be watching the country as it attempts to reform its universal health system. This is especially relevant as the World Health Organization actively pushes for universal health coverage in developed and developing countries alike as a means to achieve the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other post-MDG healthcare challenges. In early 2011, I will be spending several weeks in the Philippines,

looking at the issue of healthcare access and coverage through the lens of disease control efforts in Asia. In my free time, I enjoy wandering Tokyo's vibrant neighborhoods and being pushed onto crowded subway trains. Up next: The 2011 January Grand Sumo Tournament! Apparently "Raider" was the name of a famous sumo wrestler in the Japanese Edo period...who knew!

– **Rayden Llano, Tokyo, Japan**

THE children laugh as I mispronounce the Lao word for "duck" (ຝັງ, p(b)et), instead saying (ຝັງ, p(h)et) "spicy." We are reading to each other under the glow of a new solar-powered lantern instead of the dull light from their old kerosene lamp. Traditional homemade lamps

strain eyes, give off acrid smoke, and sometimes cause burns and house fires. Many remote villages, such as this one in Xieng Khouang Province, lack electricity—a major disadvantage for evening studies and general economic development. The Lao Institute for Renewable Energy, in association with Sunlabob, seeks to bring these villages (and others around the world) quality affordable lighting by training villagers to operate and sustain local enterprises that sell light as a service. As project manager of the Sunlabob solar lantern division, I am involved in all



aspects of project implementation and development: discussion, installation and training in villages; to coordination with local and national authorities; and attracting international donors. Each village is unique and presents its own socioeconomic and engineering challenges. For example, getting services to the floating villages in Cambodia is very different from installations on land. Aside from work, my experience in the Lao PDR has been enriched with dragon boat racing on the Mekong River, lessons on the khaen (Lao musical instrument), late-night conversations with monks, and visits outside of Vientiane to see my “Lao mother.” She always welcomes my return with a warm smile and a quick ushering around the village to greet friends.

– **Michael Machala**, Vientiane, Laos



I AM in Beijing, working for the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a government-affiliated research and policy institution, in its Institute on Urban and Environmental Studies. The work here focuses on one of China’s biggest challenges—balancing the need to support the country’s urban development goals with its climate commitments. Through this work, I get to look at a range of issues, from carbon finance to the displacement of agricultural workers due to desertification. I am also learning about how the city manages the influx of people coming to Beijing to find work. I get around the city by bike and have come to love the city’s swap meets, where you can find a truly incredible variety of old Chinese bicycles from the last few decades. Beijing can be tough for someone with no natural sense of direction, but I’m having fun getting lost (most of the time) and feeling more at home every day.

– **Claire Markgraf**, Beijing, China

If New York is the city that never sleeps, Seoul is on adderall. I have spent my first six months exploring as many corners of Korean culture and performance as I can find. I have, of course, barely scratched the surface. My work at the Seoul Metropolitan Theater has included serving as a dramaturg on our current production of THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. I've also prepared post-show lectures on Shakespeare and his international relevance, taught an acting workshop to the company, and served as a guest judge at the 2010 Shakespeare Festival, co-hosted by the Shakespeare Association of Korea and the National Theatre of Korea. Outside of work, I seek out different cultural adventures, regularly encountering Seoul's unique melee of East and West, old and new. These adventures have led me to the tops of tall mountains, the basements of tiny theaters, an overnight stay at a Buddhist temple, a 7-hour Shaman ritual, and many, many trips to the Korean baths.



– **Shira Milikowsky, Seoul, Korea**



FOR my Luce year, I had hoped for placement in a cosmopolitan, urban landscape with a growing media arts community and the chance to somehow combine the corporate and non-profit worlds of entertainment. In Singapore, I am hosted by the Asian Film Archive, a registered charity founded to preserve the rich film heritage of Singapore and Asian Cinema. There, I work on event coordination for community outreach programmes and screenings, as well as workshops for educators on film literacy and its application to the classroom.

There was also the strangely hypnotic process of hand-cleaning film reels of 1960s Malay classics. I also had the opportunity last fall to work with HBO Asia (the HBO hub for the Asian Region), producing branded promotional content highlighting films aired on several HBO channels.

I often forget that I am living, working and existing in Asia. It's easy to forget in Singapore, as the Lion City offers a familiarity that gives a sense, at least initially, that only a subtle cultural shift has occurred. The shift is in fact far from subtle, and in time, I've come to see that this is a land more foreign than any I've previously experienced. While it glistens like the San Diego of Asia, the fascinating paradoxes of this country undoubtedly contribute to Asia's mystique. And what beyond the shores here? More. Different. Better. Worse. Yet – contrary to what some might believe – Singapore, with its many guises, offers relevance to

the Asian experience that, like much of how this city-state operates, refuses to be overlooked. I like that I am spending a year in a country in which every outbound transit is international and every inbound transit adds to the vast cultural diversity that, at its very core, defines Singapore's identity.

– **Juliana Montgomery, Singapore**



**N**O two days here are the same. Living and working with nineteen girls from three countries and various hill-tribe communities, I have become keenly aware of the realities of daily life in border communities of the Golden Triangle region. Migratory trends here lead to the trafficking of young girls, who often end up as sex workers. The Development and Education Program for Daughters and Communities Center in Northern Thailand's Chiang Rai Province

offers rescue services and works to prevent human trafficking in the Mekong Sub-Region. Our headquarters is based in Mae Sai, on the Myanmar border. I live and work in Chiang Khong at the Child Rights Protection Shelter, located twelve hours north of Bangkok, only two hours south of China and fifteen minutes west of Laos. I am fascinated by the complex tapestry of this country, as it has the world's longest reigning monarch and is the only Southeast Asian country that was never colonized. Accessible Buddhist nuns and teaching monks all over Thailand have enriched my experience by answering questions about the relationship between religion and Thai culture. Despite the difficulty of learning this tonal language, Thai people and I have shared one thing in common from day one: We love to eat. I enjoy frequenting the countless markets and indulging in Thai street-food, riding my bike through our residential neighborhood amongst rai (Thai land measurement) of rice fields, hiking in the local mountains, and watching the sun rise over the Mekong River.

Christmas presented one of the most memorable days thus far. I used information gathered during our lessons and interactions throughout the year to personalize gifts for each girl, and it turned into a lively neighborhood party with great food and company. The Luce Scholar from Laos visited and brought French bread, gingerbread cookies with icing to decorate, and journals for each girl; the Luce Scholar from Bangkok mailed each girl a Thai-English Dictionary! Thanks to the support from fellow Scholars, my co-workers, and the community, everyone at the Center had an exciting day we'll always remember. Prior to Luce, I had lived and worked in Africa and the Middle East, but never traveled to Asia, let alone considered moving there. This experience has broadened my world view and I have learned so much. Therefore, more than half-way through this Luce year, I can say without a doubt: There is nowhere else I would have rather spent these thirteen months.

– **Ouleye Ndoye, Chiang Khong, Thailand**

**A**FTER six months in Cambodia, I am piecing together the answers to some of the many questions with which I arrived. The Cambodian family that has adopted me helps answer my general questions about daily life. Through eating dinner at their apartment or visiting them at their clothing stall in the market, I learn about their routines and family dynamics. My Cambodian friends share their thoughts about work and relationships, admiring my jobs abroad while pitying me for being a “kramom jah”—an old unmarried woman—at age



26. I find answers to many of my most specific questions through my work at Legal Aid of Cambodia. I assist civil party lawyers to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the tribunal trying former Khmer Rouge leaders. Working with our team of national and international lawyers, I interview clients, contribute to admissibility appeals for rejected civil party applicants, and conduct legal research to prepare for the second trial (Case 002). I strive to understand the trials’ effects on the country: What do Cambodians think of the tribunal? Do I believe the trials are achieving justice and promoting reconciliation and accountability? As I get closer to answering parts of my questions, I find I have more and more to ask.

– Gillian Quandt, Phnom Pehn, Cambodia



**I**NDONESIA has been in the news a lot recently, with a tsunami, earthquake, volcano eruption and visit from President Obama all in less than three weeks. At KBR 68H, Indonesia’s largest independent radio news station and my placement organization, I quickly learned that there are no “slow news days” here. My Jakartan colleagues work day and night, sometimes sleeping in the bunk beds in the office, producing content to broadcast across the archipelago. Most of the programs are in Indonesian, but one program, Asia Calling, is in English. So far I’ve been the host, producer, editor and audio engineer of that program, broadcast in nine countries throughout Asia. Outside the newsroom, my favorite activity has been teaching songs from the TV show Glee to a group of East Jakarta teenagers – I’m pretty smitten with them. I’m also doing a bit of adventuring outside the capital; I’ve already visited eight of Indonesia’s 17,000 islands (I hope to make it to at least 17 by the end of the Luce year, so then I’ll be able to say I’ve visited .1% .)

– Julia Simon, Jakarta, Indonesia