

Executive Summary

from Chairman of the Board, Daniel Fung

In 2017 and 2018, International Bridges to Justice made astonishing progress on the fundamentally important goal of putting justice within reach of everyone. For almost twenty years now, I have witnessed first-hand IBJ's effective methods of bringing reform to existing legal systems as well as developing legal aid programs that promote pro bono ethics in Africa, Asia, and beyond. Sometimes creating, sometimes reinforcing, legal infrastructures in order to ensure access to counsel, the right to a fair trial and the right to be protected from cruel and unusual punishment, IBJ brings all the key stakeholders to their roundtables to discuss each and every aspect required to make the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 a local, national, and global reality.

IBJ is committed to furthering its vision and mission by tackling the issues of access to justice and prevention of interrogative torture from every conceivable angle. Significant moments in IBJ history during this time period included the 2017 signing of a memorandum of understanding with Burundi's National Police. This resulted in a series of training sessions for judicial police officers on due process, rule of law, and protecting the rights of the accused. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), IBJ lawyers are now able to make regular visits to one of the country's most overpopulated prisons to assist pre-trial detainees. Furthermore, a lawyer training attracted such eminent trainers as the president of the Human Rights Commission of the Bar Association of the Canton of Vaud, DRC legal scholars, and a lawyer from the International Criminal Court. In India, at Tihar Jail, one of the world's largest and most notoriously overpopulated prisons, IBJ lawyers impressively succeeded in procuring a decision from the Delhi High Court that not only occasioned the immediate release of 300 pre-trial detainees who had previously been granted bail, but also required prison authorities to ensure that no such detainee be kept in prison. IBJ also had a particularly fruitful year in 2017

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in Myanmar, with the launch of the country program and its impressive growth, marked by the establishment of four Justice Centers and two satellite offices, through partnerships with the Attorney General's Office, local Chief Justices, and the Supreme Court.

IBJ's country program in Rwanda also experienced landmark achievements. With the support of the Minister of Justice, IBJ signed a memorandum of understanding with the Rwanda Bar Association. In 2018, groundbreaking human rights training sessions for criminal defense lawyers and prosecutors underlined how torture during interrogation destroys the credibility of a case. But by far the most cutting-edge program to be launched in Rwanda was the Women Lawyers Network, which coordinates monthly meetings for female lawyers to share experiences, challenges, and ideas critical to their professional growth.

IBJ encourages its country programs to implement innovative solutions, particularly those that take the long view toward prevention. In India, IBJ collaborated with a jewelry artisan council to create a workshop

in a Delhi prison that provides female inmates with vocational skills to promote rehabilitation and prevent recidivism caused by poverty. Another creative initiative instigated in Myanmar was a theater production promoting legal rights awareness that presented and discussed the story of a person who was illegally searched after being accused of theft. IBJ recognizes the immense value of showing youth the transformative power they can wield, particularly concerning systems of justice and ending the use of torture as an investigative tool. In accordance with this idea, IBJ's Youth Initiative is creating and mobilizing a network of young people around the world to promote and support their efforts to implement SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. In 2017, IBJ brought together students, government officials, and corporate and faith leaders in Davos to discuss how early access to justice can prevent torture. In 2018, IBJ's signature event at the UN Human Rights Council focused on the idea that youth are some of the principal actors capable of advancing IBJ's vision around the world.

One of the many reasons I was proud and honored to accept the responsibility as Chairman of the Board was due to IBJ's fearlessness in implementing projects in places where they are most needed, which are often the most dangerous. IBJ began development of Syria's first-ever national criminal defense law manual and organized roundtables in Aleppo and Idlib, bringing together defense lawyers, judges, police officers, prosecutors, and other government officials. These trailblazing meetings focused on improving respect for the accused's right to silence, early access to justice, and other fundamental human rights principles.

In its role as an NGO super-connector, IBJ believes it has a responsibility to engender and support partnerships between every person and organization and entity it has touched over the last two decades. An efficient way to achieve this goal is to create a technological solution that will provide space for justice makers around the world to connect. Thus, IBJ broke the ground on development for country-specific JusticeHub apps, beginning in Syria, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka, and culminating in a JusticeHub platform to connect them all. These technological solutions can provide any service that the mind can imagine,

from enabling individuals to find trained lawyers to providing a platform for trainings, legal resources, and rights awareness events. In this modern era, the use of technology in providing and ensuring justice is critical to protecting and saving lives.

Reflecting back over the obstacles overcome and the accomplishments achieved over the past two years, I am, as always, proud of the enormously positive impact of IBJ's work not only in the domain of legal system reform but also in the lives of individual detainees. With the generous assistance of our worldwide network of partners and supporters, we will continue to grow our impactful and innovative projects, such as our Defender Resource Centers, our JusticeMakers Fellows, our Criminal DefenseWiki and our Lawyer2Lawyer program, to name a few. Thank you all, for being there at our side in our efforts to spread justice, well-being, and hope to as many people as possible, and to more of them every year.



Daniel R. Fung was the first person of Chinese descent to serve as Solicitor General of Hong Kong. He did so both before and after Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. He is the President of the Hong Kong chapter of the International Law Association and Chairman of the Peace and Development Foundation, the official partner in Hong Kong of the United Nations Development Programme in China.