The Community Legal Education Center (CLEC) was founded in 1996 with the aim of promoting the rule of law, justice and democracy in Cambodia. In the wake of the Paris Peace Agreement 1991, CLEC has sought to develop upon this framework of peace-building and democracy within local communities and NGOs through activities that combine legal-awareness, advocacy support and training. Originally operating as an arm of the San Francisco School of Law, in 2001 CLEC officially became a registered NGO, having since embarked upon numerous public-interest advocacy projects in Cambodia concerning natural resource, labour and land disputes. Through the provision of legal aid and empowerment of vulnerable communities and individuals, CLEC aims for the realisation of human-rights respect within Cambodia as well as the development of good governance.

The CLEC’s current programs aim to improve the capacities, knowledge and protection of communities in issues concerning policy development in land, labour and natural resources. Despite the strong economic growth of Cambodia in recent years, 13.5% of the population lives below the poverty line, and powerful interests continue to dominate many issues concerning economic growth. CLEC provides direct access to justice for many vulnerable people through consultation services and legal representation as well the publication of serialized law textbooks covering a broad range of subjects. Since its inception, CLEC has educated over 5000 Cambodians in a range of legal issues through its “certificate in law” program and has been involved in many significant issues: the implementation of the 2001 Land Law; the sub-decree on indigenous communal land titling; establishment of the Arbitration Council; the election dispute resolution process; the drafting of the Peaceful Assembly Law. With the increasing pace of globalisation and foreign commercial interests, CLEC’s legal advocacy programs and services provide an important fixture in the equitable development of Cambodia.

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1 The Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) is an NGO affiliated with the Faculty of Law at UNSW in Sydney. Since 1990, it has provided training to over 2600 human rights defenders and community advocates. These individuals work for a wide range of organisations working to promote shared values of human rights – in different ways. This profile is part of a series developed by DTP (www.dtp.unsw.edu.au) to illustrate the richness and diversity of the organisations working to promote human rights more broadly.
3 Framework that allows for individuals to register land at a nationally-recognised level.