

Karen Tse
International Bridges to Justice



A former public defender, Karen Tse first developed her interest in the cross section of criminal law and human rights as a Thomas J. Watson Fellow in 1986, after observing Southeast Asian refugees detained in a local prison without trial. In 1994, she moved to Cambodia to train the country's first core group of public defenders and subsequently served as a United Nations Judicial Mentor. Under the auspices of the U.N., she trained judges and prosecutors, and established the first arraignment court in Cambodia. After witnessing thousands of prisoners of all ages being held without trials, usually after being tortured into making "confessions," Karen founded International Bridges to Justice in 2000 to promote systemic global change in the administration of criminal justice. In the initial stages, she negotiated ground-breaking measures in judicial reform with the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian governments. Under her leadership, IBJ has expanded its programming to sixteen countries, including Rwanda, Burundi and India. IBJ has created a Global Defense Support Program to bring IBJ assistance to public defenders worldwide. In 2010, IBJ launched the Justice Training Center in Singapore. A graduate of UCLA Law School and Harvard Divinity School, Karen was named by U.S. News & World Report as one of America's Best Leaders in 2007. She has been recognized by the Skoll Foundation, Ashoka and Echoing Green as a leading social entrepreneur. Karen was the recipient of the 2008 Harvard Divinity School's First Decade Award, and the 2008 American Bar Association's International Human Rights Award. She also received the 2009 Gleitsman International Award at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.