

Cambodia | A Conversation with an ASEAN Insider: Daron Wong

Share with us a bit about yourself.

I am Daron Wong, a Malaysian, and currently a Corporate Counsel attached to SokSiphana&associates.

Share with us where were you seconded to and for how long?

I was seconded to SokSiphana&associates, the Cambodian network office of ZICO Law, for 30 months. I was based in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia.

Share with us how you adjusted to the culture in your seconded country.

Personally, my key to any foreign culture is to indulge in their local cuisine! The first few Khmer words I learnt are relating to food!

All in all, I went to Cambodia with an open mind and eagerness to experience the rich Khmer culture – which helps in adapting to the different lifestyle in Cambodia. Anyhow, the Cambodians are generally very friendly. They greet each other, even with strangers, with “bong” or “aun”, which loosely translate to “brother/sister” and “younger brother/sister” respectively.

Describe the most memorable/significant events you have experienced during your secondment?

The warmth of the partners in welcoming me to Cambodia and the comradeship of the colleagues! The partners treated me like a family member and have numerous times included me in their family events. The colleagues are fantastic – we bonded very quickly! One of the most supportive colleagues one could have ask for.

What have you learnt and gained during your secondment and how has that helped you?

To look from many perspectives in attending to a legal issue. The legal framework in Cambodia is not as comprehensive comparing to other more developed nations such as Malaysia or Singapore. This creates uncertainty and also flexibility. The clients in Cambodia value creative legal solutions and demand a legal practitioner to provide sensible, practical and business-enhancing legal strategies in attending their deals. Often times, the clients are unaware of any adverse impact of a particular deal towards their other businesses. I would need to understand the client’s businesses fully and to study their business expansion plans so that I can tackle a particular legal issue in a cohesive manner taking into consideration the legal risks towards their other businesses.

How do you see the opportunities posted by the various lines of businesses in ZICO and its ASEAN network?

The world is becoming borderless and it is no longer sufficient for legal practitioners to be “legal-centric” in a particular jurisdiction. In the corporate world, the clients appreciate a well-informed legal advisor. The overall ZICO business network enables a legal practitioner to seamlessly learn from other business solution providers or legal advisors from the regional network, to provide a comprehensive, all encompassing, legal solution to the client.

Would you go for another secondment or recommend your colleagues for secondment?

Absolutely!

In few words, how would you describe the secondment experience?

Enriching, deliberating, engaging and gratifying.

How is it like to work in ZICO/ZICO Law so far?

I started my professional career as a Trainee Associate in ZICO Law Malaysia, thereafter retained under the umbrella of ZICO Law Singapore, was seconded to ZICO Law Cambodia and upon the end of my secondment tenure, transferred to ZICO Law Cambodia. It has been a very interesting career journey for me to be part of ZICO Law and I have personally benefited from the ZICO Law ASEAN network expansion. The partners of the ZICO Law network are very inclusive and very willing to share their knowledge and local insights. Professionally, I have been exposed to almost all aspects of the legal industry – consolidating legal knowledge, sharpening legal skills and professional practices, gaining industries insights, managing clients and to a certain extent, playing a role in leading a firm. ZICO Law has indeed trained me to be a more wholesome ASEAN lawyer.

