



# Alumni Spotlight

## Cristina Mansfield

Class of 2004

International Development Consultant  
Manchester Center, Vermont



by Cristina Mansfield

*The Alumni Spotlight focuses on an MAB alum and is written by Cristina Mansfield, a 2004 graduate.*

### Consulting around the world

As the writer of many of the Alumni Spotlight profiles for the Syllabus Newsletter since 2006, the spotlight was bound to turn on MAB alum Cristina Mansfield sooner or later. Those who remember her will recall that Cristina entered the MAB program while living in Cambodia and running a non-profit organization, which she funded with her own consulting fees.

“The organization does not exist anymore, but we had a lot of fun and it is a pleasure to see my former staff doing so well today.”

Her MAB thesis, “Social Capital and Land Reform in Cambodia,” examined social capital theory and its relationship to economic growth and land reform in Cambodia. She hypothesized that decades of civil strife depleted social capital, negatively affecting institutional performance, equity of land distribution, and transparency of allocation of resources previously held in communal management.

After seven years in Cambodia, it was time to come home. With no idea of what to do, she “lucked” into a job researching recent immigrants to California for University of California-San Francisco. The fieldwork was rigorous and proved to be an eye opener. From the rich Coachella Valley to the strawberry fields around Watsonville, Cristina observed firsthand the appalling conditions to which undocumented immigrant workers are subject.

“Hidden behind affluent housing developments we found people living under trees, in plastic tents, in caves, and in windowless trailers. For me, the American dream would never be the same.”

In 2003, Cristina decided to transition back to the east coast. To all MAB students who have yet to complete their thesis, let it be known that the only reason she completed hers was that she spent two months glued to a desk in Manhattan.

“For me, it was the only way. Writing the thesis was one of the hardest, yet most rewarding tasks, I have ever done. I did not realize it then, but it set me on the path to becoming a researcher, part-time,” she said.

Back in Boston she took up international consulting. At first the demand was mainly for her to return to Cambodia. She became a regular consultant for the anti-corruption program of Pact (a US non-profit) there, returning every year to provide assistance. In July 2010 she helped facilitate a strategic planning process for 100 staff of the government’s Anti-Corruption Unit.

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In 2006 everything changed when she was asked to conduct advocacy training for local non-profits in Uganda and Palestine (Gaza and West Bank). The 20-day course is broken up into four one-week modules given over a period of one year. Participants learn about advocacy, lobbying, legislative and policy analysis, working with the media and maintaining coalitions. She has since applied the model in Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Honduras and Haiti, and again this year in Guatemala and Zimbabwe.

“The countries are very different and it is interesting to compare their political situations. For instance, Kyrgyzstan, Honduras and Zimbabwe have all had constitutional crises recently.”

Although her work is not directly related to agriculture or agribusiness, food and land ownership are consistent themes in Cristina’s work. In Guatemala, she is working with Plataforma Agraria, a federation of farm worker associations. In November, she will co-facilitate a workshop in Nairobi for the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance on a “Food for Africa” Campaign. Sadly, the 2009 FAO Report on the State of World Food Insecurity states that almost one billion people in the world are hungry



Alum Cristina Mansfield (left) with participants in Honduras.

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# Be watching for upcoming events

MAB will be conducting surveys before the end of the year to get input on two future events: the 2011 professional development event and the 2012 international trip. We appreciate hearing your comments and suggestions for both events.

Planning for the fourth professional development event and alumni reunion will soon begin. Previous events have been held in Kansas City and Manhattan and featured a variety of topics including biofuels, risk management, and cap & trade. If you are interested in being part of the planning committee to help determine topics and speakers for the event, please contact Mary at [mjbowen@ksu.edu](mailto:mjbowen@ksu.edu).

Previous international trips have been to South America

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agreement between the two schools.

Alum Tim Loh helped organize the informational meeting in Singapore and believes the new cohort offers a great opportunity for more agribusiness professionals to gain necessary business and economic skills.

“Having worked commercially in shipping and agricultural commodities trading in Southeast Asia for over 15 years, I wanted to upgrade my knowledge and skills in agribusiness when I learned of KSU’s MAB Program. The comprehensive curriculum and structure of learning offered a good balance between study and work. The highly relevant and up-to-date subjects nicely complemented the work that I was doing for the American Soybean Association International Marketing as its Marketing Director for Southeast Asia in Singapore,” Loh said.

MAB students in Southeast Asia will earn the same master’s



(Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay), Russia, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam), and New Zealand & Australia. Where should we go in 2012? We need your help to decide, so be sure to cast your vote.

Students, alumni, advisory board members, faculty, co-workers and friends are welcome to participate in all MAB professional development events and trips. We will have more information about both events in the Winter Syllabus Newsletter. For more information about our previous trips and events, please go to [www.mab.ksu.edu](http://www.mab.ksu.edu) and click on Alumni.

*Be watching for emails with links to the surveys and please take a few minutes to add your input.*

degree from Kansas State University and have the same instructors as those in the original cohort. The only differences between the two cohorts will be the campus session dates and location.

Faculty will adapt the curriculum to address Southeast Asia’s business environment and students will learn about real

business situations through interaction with visiting K-State faculty, industry leaders and classmates. Not only an option for national companies in Southeast Asia, employees of multi-national companies may find this new cohort offers an even greater international education than attending the program in the U.S.

If you are interested in learning more about the Southeast Asia cohort, please contact Lynnette at [lynnett@ksu.edu](mailto:lynnett@ksu.edu).

*MAB Alum Tim Loh gives a presentation at a seminar in Singapore. His topic was Highlights of the World Agricultural Supply Demand Estimates (WASDE) August Report.*

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and malnourished. Development aid agencies that once distributed supplies or provided services are increasingly looking to advocacy as a strategy for relieving the poverty endured by marginalized communities.

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*Right: Participants in Mansfield’s workshop organized a demonstration for farmers to show their support of exporting agricultural products out of Gaza in 2007.*

*Left: During one of her interactive workshops, participants prepare slogans for a demonstration to protect a water source.*

