GLOBAL DUE DILIGENCE MANUAL

NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF PRO BONO

Broader Engagements Chapter

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Broader Engagements

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Introduction

Global pro bono projects can provide a variety of options for law firms and legal departments. For example, a popular option is the desk-based multi-jurisdictional research project, which can be completed remotely and is well suited to dividing work among multiple offices. The growth of online collaboration tools, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has made such projects increasingly accessible, helping facilitate coordination across jurisdictions and time zones.

This chapter, however, focuses on a subset of global pro bono which may be called broader engagements: larger-scale projects designed to help a country or region build capacity and achieve systemic change, particularly in underserved areas of the world. Such projects may be carried out in collaboration with governments, nonprofits, or academic institutions; may involve travel for the lawyers involved; and often necessitate a broader and lengthier engagement than projects involving a one-time deliverable. The number and scope of these broader engagements have grown significantly alongside the proliferation of global law firms, which are positioned to mobilize cross-border teams and local capabilities.

Examples of broader global pro bono engagements include:

- Advising an under-resourced government or nonprofit organization on legislative or policy reform
- Providing a government or non-governmental organization (NGO) with representation before an international court or body
- Assisting a human rights organization in gathering and analyzing evidence of human rights violations
- Providing transactional assistance in areas such as microfinance and microcredit
- Assisting with impact litigation
- Providing training and helping build capacity among law students or practicing lawyers
- Helping establish and advise on the management of international charities focused on humanitarian goals and supporting their broader expansion
- Providing significant and long-term legal or programmatic advice to international organizations

Broader engagements can also be strengthened by collaboration between law firms and legal departments. Where law firms often have larger staffs of legal professionals and practice areas, in-house counsel can offer tailored value to global pro bono projects, including industry-specific knowledge, established contacts, and regional business insight, such as that provided by a company's experienced government affairs team. Collaborating with a law firm or legal department can broaden a project's global reach by providing access to offices in countries and regions where your organization does not have a presence.

However, circumstances could arise in which neither entity maintains a physical presence in the relevant jurisdiction. This gap carries significant implications for the scope of permissible work, particularly with respect to the unauthorized practice of law, an issue examined in detail below.

As noted in this Manual's Introduction, global pro bono work can be divided into at least two categories: *(a)* transnational and *(b)* local, but in areas without an established tradition of pro bono service. While pro bono attorneys across jurisdictions navigate challenges such as conflicts of

interest, funding, and time constraints, global pro bono work can present a unique set of issues.

For example, a lawyer engaging in transnational pro bono and working outside their home jurisdiction may face challenges arising from physical distance, an unfamiliar legal system, and potential language differences. Another potential challenge is understanding the history, traditions, values, and political, socioeconomic, and cultural context of the country or region in which the work will take place. We will discuss later in this chapter the role of a local collaborator in navigating some of these issues.

Lawyers engaged in local pro bono work in countries without an established pro bono tradition may be familiar with the local culture, language, and socioeconomic context. However, they may still face challenges related to, for example, practice rule restrictions on pro bono, lack of local familiarity with pro bono, or limited availability of feeder organizations to identify opportunities.

Examples of Projects

The following are examples of the types of broader global pro bono engagements that law firms and in-house counsel have undertaken. Additional examples of projects that have been carried out by private-sector lawyers are included at the end of this chapter.

Legislative and Policy Reform

Lawyers may provide pro bono assistance to NGOs and governments in under-resourced regions by drafting new laws and regulations, recommending policy changes, and advising on strategies for implementation.

EXAMPLE: LAW REFORM

In 2005, DLA Piper created New Perimeter, a nonprofit affiliate that harnesses the skills of DLA Piper lawyers to provide long-term pro bono legal assistance around the world. It is dedicated to supporting access to justice, social and economic development, sound legal institutions, and nature and the environment. It engages in multi-year projects that frequently involve travel to developing regions.[1] One of New Perimeter's earliest projects involved law reform work in Kosovo in collaboration with the National Center for State Courts, a development organization. A team of DLA Piper lawyers traveled regularly to Kosovo to help local lawyers draft legislation to create the country's system of courts and public prosecution. DLA Piper then worked with the Kosovo Bar Association to revise laws affecting the legal profession and develop strategies to increase the number of women and minority lawyers in Kosovo.[2] More recently, a New Perimeter team worked with Conservation International to draft a bill that would revise Liberia's wildlife protection framework.[3]

Promoting Human Rights and Access to Justice

Lawyers can assist human rights organizations and groups seeking to ensure that all citizens are able to access the justice system. Assistance may include helping an NGO to collect testimony of human rights abuses, advising on strategic litigation strategies to help citizens secure constitutional rights, working to improve a country's court system, and advising organizations focused on informing the public about their legal rights and available avenues of recourse.

[1] New Perimeter, *About*, https://www.newperimeter.com/about/.
[2] New Perimeter, *Supporting Law Reform in Kosovo*, https://www.newperimeter.com/our-work/access-to-justice/kosovo-law-reform.html.
[3] New Perimeter, *Liberia Wildlife Protection*, https://www.newperimeter.com/our-work/economic-development/liberia-wildlife-protection.html.

EXAMPLE: ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer and its associated firms Prolegis (in Singapore) and Hiswara Bunjamin & Tandjung (in Indonesia) collaborate with the nonprofit Justice Without Borders (JWB), which works to increase access to justice for migrant domestic workers. The collaboration has included training ministry staff in Indonesia on neighboring countries' legal systems and protections against human trafficking and labor exploitation; assisting JWB in bringing cross-border compensation claims for individual domestic workers; strategic litigation and policy research; contributions to training manuals; and clinical legal education workshops for caseworkers and domestic workers in Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Singapore.[4]

Promoting Social and Economic Development

Lawyers can help advance social and economic development in less developed regions by undertaking activities such as assisting social entrepreneurs with their legal needs, providing transactional and other assistance to microfinance organizations seeking to increase impoverished people's access to financial services, helping organizations seeking to encourage direct investment in a particular country or region, advising governments on strategies to attract businesses and investment, and negotiating financial agreements such as impact bonds and debt swaps.

EXAMPLE: LEGAL CLINIC

New Perimeter has collaborated with Uzhhorod National University Faculty of Law, a law school in Western Ukraine, to help establish a legal clinic to assist Ukrainian small businesses impacted by war. As part of the project, New Perimeter also provided virtual training to law students and faculty on pro bono and public interest law to promote pro bono culture in the region. The clinic supports Ukrainian small businesses facing labor shortages, infrastructure failures, supply chain disruptions, and financial challenges caused by conflict, while contributing to access to justice education and professional development.[5]

EXAMPLE: DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

White & Case worked with Bridges Outcomes Partnerships, a UK-based nonprofit, to structure a Development Impact Bond (DIB) in Kenya to fund sexual and reproductive health services for girls aged 15 to 19. The bond aims to address barriers preventing adolescents from accessing quality care in Kenya, including related to the ongoing impacts of the Ebola and COVID-19 crises. The project involved collaboration among several nonprofit partners as well as the UN Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, whose funding commitments were tied to the project's outcomes. This is one of the first DIBs of its kind in Kenya.[6]

[4] Hiswara Bunjamin & Tandjung in Association With Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, *Justice without borders*, https://www.hbtlaw.com/pro-bono-and-citizenship/justice-without-borders; Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, *Work in support of refugees, displaced persons and forced migrants: Justice Without Borders*, https://www.hsfkramer.com/pro-bono-legal/supporting-refugees-displaced-persons-and-forced-migrants.

[5] New Perimeter, *Supporting Small Businesses and Pro Bono in Ukraine*, https://www.newperimeter.com/our-work/legal-institutions/supporting-small-businesses-and-pro-bono-in-ukraine.html.

[6] White & Case, *An impactful bond*, https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/2023-global-citizenship-review-impactful-bond.

Building Governmental Capacity

Government lawyers and officials in less developed regions often seek the advice of private sector lawyers in areas such as contract drafting and negotiations, international arbitration, and other specific areas of law such as the regulation of natural resources.

EXAMPLE: RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

In 2023, the multinational electrical utility company Iberdrola launched Construyendo Juntos (Building Together), a global pro bono collaboration between the company, including its subsidiaries, and 14 international law firms. Error! Bookmark not defined. **The collaboration's projects include a report on Climate Change and Children in Facilities co-published by Iberdrola, Baker McKenzie, and the Global Initiative on Justice With Children. Baker McKenzie and Iberdrola presented the report at the UN-sponsored World Congress on Justice with Children in 2025. Firm and company lawyers from Spain, the US, Mexico, Brazil, and Scotland contributed research on the intersection of natural disasters and other impacts of climate change with children's justice and child homelessness, highlighting the need for protections for children in emergency situations and for disaster preparedness and mitigation protocols tailored to vulnerable child populations.**Error! Bookmark not defined.

EXAMPLE: ENFORCEMENT

Ropes & Gray supported the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA) in developing its training program for enforcing Zimbabwean wildlife laws. The project included a review of existing training materials, assistance preparing a manual outlining international and domestic law related to wildlife protection in Zimbabwe, and providing pre-recorded training sessions delivered by Ropes & Gray lawyers alongside ZELA members to enforcement officials and judicial officers.[7]

EXAMPLE: MODEL TREATY

K&L Gates assisted the Government of The Gambia to prepare a model bilateral investment treaty. In collaboration with others, K&L Gates lawyers from several international offices assisted the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration & Employment of the Government to develop the Sustainable Investment Facilitation and Cooperation Agreement (SIFCA), which combines principles of investment protection with investor obligations provided by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.[8]

Representing Governments and NGOs before International Courts or Bodies

Lawyers may provide pro bono assistance to NGOs or governments of under-resourced countries to help them understand and comply with the requirements of international institutions such as the United Nations and its various agencies, engage in processes such as multilateral negotiations, and appear before international tribunals.

[7] Ropes & Gray, *Ropes & Gray Supports Pro Bono Client Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association with Wildlife Crime Training Programme*, https://www.ropesgray.com/en/news-and-events/news/2024/01/ropes-gray-supports-pro-bono-client-zimbabwe-environmental-law-association.

[8] K&L Gates, *Pro Bono: About*, https://www.klgates.com/pro-bono.

EXAMPLE: NEGOTIATION

New Perimeter has provided pro bono assistance to several developing country governments to support their participation in international environmental negotiations, including conferences of the parties to the UN conventions on climate, desertification, and biodiversity. This work has leveraged both international legal knowledge to better understand complex treaty frameworks and decision texts and personnel to more effectively navigate the landscape of multilateral negotiations. DLA Piper lawyers have attended UN-sponsored climate change and environmental negotiations to advise these delegations and help negotiate on their behalf.[9]

Advising on Impact Litigation Strategies

Rules against the unauthorized practice of law generally prohibit lawyers from directly representing clients in lawsuits in jurisdictions where they are not licensed to practice. However, lawyers can advise local lawyers on general and case-specific litigation strategies and share international best practices, particularly in the area of strategic impact litigation.

EXAMPLE: IMPACT LITIGATION

Baker McKenzie represented the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as an intervener in litigation successfully challenging the UK's policy to deport asylum seekers and relocate them to Rwanda.[10] **UNHCR intervened on the basis of its mandate to supervise the application of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and briefed the court on matters related to international refugee law and protection standards.**[11] **Ultimately, the UK Supreme Court unanimously agreed that the policy was unlawful.**[12]

Project Development

There is no simple blueprint for developing larger-scale international projects. Developing these projects can be a lengthy and time-consuming endeavor, often taking up to a year for the projects to materialize fully. Ideas for projects can come from a number of sources. They may be generated internally by firm or legal department lawyers with an interest in a particular cause or a strong connection to an organization or country. Global pro bono clearinghouses like PILnet, A4ID, The International Senior Lawyers Project, Lawyers Without Borders, Avocats sans Frontieres, and Trustlaw may offer opportunities for lawyers to participate in a global pro bono project. Many organizations, including Pro Bono Institute, the International Bar Association, and the American Bar Association, also have specific global pro bono websites, which can provide resources to assist in the development of global projects. Pro bono project opportunities may also arise following an organization's direct request. At larger international firms with sizeable teams of full-time pro bono lawyers, projects may be generated internally following pro bono staff's direct outreach. These initial conversations often lead to a visit with the prospective client in the country where the firm is considering undertaking pro bono work.

Identifying the Client

As with any pro bono engagement, legal teams must identify the client at the outset. Is the client an organization, individual, or government? Such identification is important for both conflicts purposes and ensuring the scope of representation is clear. Clients outside a jurisdiction in which a firm or company operates can present a challenge for conflicts clearance. Regular automated conflicts check procedures may not be sufficient. It may also be necessary to contact senior management or

[9] E.g., New Perimeter, *Assisting Georgia with Climate Change Negotiations*, https://www.newperimeter.com/our-work/economic-development/georgia-unfccc-kp.html.

[10] The Law Society Gazette, *Lawyer in the news: Joanna Ludlam, Baker McKenzie*, Jan. 6, 2023, https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/lawyer-in-the-news/lawyer-in-the-news-joanna-ludlam-baker-mckenzie/5114717.article; Baker McKenzie, *Olivia Strafford*, https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/people/s/strafford-olivia.

[11] UNHCR USA, *UNHCR welcomes the UK Supreme Court judgement on transfer of asylum-seekers*, Nov. 15, 2023, https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/press-releases/unhcr-welcomes-uk-supreme-court-judgement-transfer-asylum-seekers.

[12] Ben Rigby, *UK Supreme Court rules Rwanda asylum policy unlawful*, Global Legal Post, https://www.globallegalpost.com/news/uk-supreme-court-rules-rwanda-asylum-policy-unlawful-31571884.

lawyers working in the relevant region or practice area to ensure that the project does not compromise a company objective or client relationship.

Identifying Project Collaborators

Because of potential logistical and cultural challenges of working in foreign jurisdictions, legal teams are encouraged to have at least one local collaborator or client with a presence in the jurisdiction and relevant regional knowledge. Whether a collaborator is a local law firm or organization, their assistance and guidance is often a key component of a project in a jurisdiction outside of a company's normal operational boundaries.

Undertaking Due Diligence

Because international projects may involve politically sensitive issues, take place in unfamiliar regions, or involve unfamiliar organizations, teams are encouraged to undertake significant due diligence on their client, the proposed project, and potential project collaborators. This is discussed further in the next section.

Drafting a Project Proposal

At all stages of project development, a working draft of a project proposal may prove beneficial. The proposal may serve as a project roadmap and include information about all involved parties, the need for the project, goals and expected outcome, a detailed description of the work that will be performed, a timeline, a description of anticipated necessary resources, and a proposed budget. The proposal may also be used for internal purposes to garner support and buy-in for the project, as well as to recruit additional external project collaborators.

Memorializing the Scope of Representation or Collaboration

When initiating a project, it is necessary to set clear expectations with all parties regarding every aspect of the commitment and who will be responsible for each. The agreement should unambiguously set out the terms of the engagement, including:

- Clear identification of the client and lawyers and a statement regarding the existence of an attorney-client relationship;
- A detailed description of the legal services that will be provided;
- Clear allocation of responsibility for costs and expenses associated with the engagement, including travel, court, and filing fees;
- Applicable law in the event of a disagreement;
- Expectations regarding communications between the client and lawyers *(e.g.,* frequency and the principal point of contact);
- The anticipated duration of the engagement;
- Grounds for termination of the attorney-client relationship; and
- The agreed approach to publicity and possible media attention.

If additional project collaborators are involved, a legal team is encouraged to draft a multi-party agreement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), prior to commencement of the project. The MOU may take the place of a client engagement agreement, or it may supplement a separate client engagement agreement entered into directly between the lawyers and client. An MOU may include, in addition to the information listed above:

- Identification of the participating entities;
- A detailed explanation of the roles and responsibilities of each entity;
- A clear statement of the project client;
- A clear statement of project goals;
- The timeframe;
- Personnel commitment;
- The budget and costs, including who will cover which costs;
- Clarification of IP rights for work product;
- Expectations for addressing press coverage and media outreach;
- Expectations surrounding communications between project collaborators;
- The effective date, duration, and termination of partnership; and

- Assignment of project management oversight, including a clear delineation of roles and duties of each project collaborator.

Evaluation of the Project Proposal

Which elements of a global pro bono project warrant the dedication of a firm's or company's resources? How can one evaluate whether to take on a broad-scale international engagement? To answer these questions, one may undertake both internal and external due diligence processes.

Due Diligence

1. Due Diligence on Clients and Potential Collaborators

Teams are encouraged to obtain detailed information about potential clients and project collaborators prior to committing to a significant pro bono engagement. Understanding a client's focus and capacity is often critical. This includes reviewing the organization's past projects, partnerships, and sources of funding and other support. Consider starting with general research on an organization's website. Identify the members of the organization's Board of Directors. For US-based charities, check whether the organization is listed on Candid (formerly Guidestar) or Charity Navigator, both of which include all publicly available information and rank organizations on effectiveness and transparency. In the United Kingdom, visit Guidestar UK, which has partner websites in Israel and India. In Canada, visit Charity Intelligence Canada. For Australia-based charities, check the government's Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the independent organization ChangePath. Other countries of interest may have similar websites for evaluating charities. Meanwhile, smaller organizations may require additional research. Consider speaking to others who have worked with the organization to better understand its history. Determine how long the organization has been in operation, its budget, and how many people it employs, including in the country or region in which the work will take place. If the organization is particularly small, managing a project could be unduly burdensome. Ask about its experience in working with lawyers, both for a fee and on a pro bono basis. Organizations that are not accustomed to working with lawyers may not understand the role that lawyers can play in providing assistance. Consider identifying the primary point of contact and who will manage the relationship.

Similarly, assess the capacity of potential project collaborators and their ability to support the project. In addition to conducting general online research, consider contacting others who have worked with the individuals in the past. Understand in advance exactly what they offer in terms of financial resources, capabilities, and available personnel.

2. Feasibility

At the start of a proposed project, determine whether it involves specific, tangible, and achievable goals. The following questions may assist in making this determination:

- Are the project goals achievable within the specified time period?
- Do participating lawyers have the capabilities and experience necessary to undertake the proposed project? If not, can the necessary knowledge and skills be developed through available training and support resources?
- Are sufficient internal resources available at the law firm or legal department to provide the requested assistance?
- Would the potential project create actual or likely conflicts? Could involvement adversely impact the firm's or company's reputation?
- Is the level of commitment expressed by the project client and collaborators sufficient to achieve the project's goals?
- Is there requisite internal interest and support?

3. Anticipated Impact

Appropriate thought should be given at the outset to measuring the project's impact and results. What is the client's stated goal? Is it possible to track whether that goal has been met or measure the number of people positively impacted by the results of your efforts? Also consider sustainability. Is the project

intended to outlast the firm or department's involvement? Are there resources in place to ensure its viability following that involvement?

4. Fit

Does the project align with the firm's or company's interests and pro bono and corporate responsibility goals? If not, could the project be adjusted with an eye toward alignment? Alternatively, could the project be referred to a more suitable firm or department?

5. Need and Uniqueness

Assessing the need for a project is an important part of determining whether to proceed. Assess need based on information provided by the client and your own due diligence and background research. Determine whether your firm or department can make a unique contribution or whether it will duplicate others' efforts. One way to make this assessment is to ask, "But for our involvement, will the desired results be achieved?"

Resources Needed

1. Staffing

Determine how many and what types of lawyers will be needed to carry out the project. If the project requires knowledge not currently available among the volunteering attorneys, determine whether those capabilities can be developed through a partnership or additional training. Consider in advance the types of training and support the project volunteers will likely need. It may be necessary to secure volunteers from a particular jurisdiction depending on the requirements of the legal assistance. Also consider whether it will be possible to incorporate non-lawyers into the project. Assistance may be needed from IT staff or administrative support. In addition, other departments of a company, such as a government affairs department, may add value to a project.

Another consideration is the solicitation and selection of participating lawyers. Will they be selected on a first-come, first-served basis or based on relevant experience, competitive applications, and/or interviews? The best approach may depend on the level of interest among potential volunteers, their understanding of the subject matter involved, experience working in the given region, past travel experience, relevant language skills, and, importantly, their level of interest and enthusiasm for the project.

In addition to assessing the number of volunteers necessary to complete the project, determine who will provide internal project management, including task allocation to individual volunteers, and external management of the relationship with the client and project collaborators.

2. Joint Staffing

When staffing a project jointly with lawyers from both a law firm and a legal department, each group is encouraged to consider and communicate in advance the capabilities and resources they could contribute to the project. This includes responsibility for overall project management, which is often handled by the law firm. It may be beneficial to split the staffing equally so that the law firm lawyers and in-house counsel can complement each other's knowledge and strengths. If equal staffing is not possible, the project team may adopt a different staffing model, such as having the law firm provide a greater number of volunteers.

3. Funding Requirements

When assembling a proposed budget for the project, the legal team is encouraged to consider the following costs:

- **Lawyer time** (*i.e.*, donation of pro bono resources): Calculate the anticipated number of hours committed and the projected value of those hours.
- **Potential travel expenses:** Determine whether the client or a project collaborator can help defray travel costs if necessary. If the client or project collaborator receives funding from an international aid agency or development bank, funding may be available to assist with travel costs.
- **Out-of-pocket expenses:** Additional costs may arise during the life of the project, such as research expenses (including for services such as

LexisNexis and Westlaw) and expenses related to the printing or publication of materials.

- **Client expenses**: Establish whether the client expects to be reimbursed for some of its costs, such as those related to staff time.

Issues Related to the Unauthorized Practice of Law

Global pro bono projects can raise concerns about the unauthorized practice of law as the lawyers working on a project may not be licensed in the jurisdiction in which they are providing pro bono services. For this reason, it is advisable to carefully review the policies related to unauthorized practice in the countries the project will involve. As a first step, review the relevant chapter of the Global Pro Bono Guide.[13] Information about a jurisdiction's policies can also generally be found through the country's bar association. There are often restrictions on the types of services unlicensed lawyers can provide. For example, most jurisdictions prohibit lawyers from appearing in court if they are not licensed in the jurisdiction in which the court sits. They also generally prohibit foreign lawyers from providing legal counsel related to local laws.

The high likelihood of restrictions on unlicensed practice underscores the value of working directly with or having access to local counsel if necessary. When evaluating the legal needs of a particular project, consider whether the requested tasks might constitute unauthorized practice. There are many ways an outside lawyer can add value to a project without violating these rules, drawing upon international best practices and legal norms of the jurisdiction in which they are licensed.

Potential Elements of a Successful Project

Although each project may raise different issues and considerations, certain consistent elements often help to achieve success across pro bono areas and regions. They include:

- A strong and engaged local collaborator with resources on the ground;
- A strong understanding among all participating lawyers of the culture and legal tradition of the relevant region or country;
- A detailed agreement among the collaborating entities that clearly assigns responsibilities and outlines expectations;
- The establishment of concrete and realistic goals;
- A detailed plan and timeframe for achieving the project goals;
- Sufficient staffing and monetary resources;
- Frequent and open communication between the project collaborators and with the client;
- A clear exit strategy that establishes expectations for when and how the project will conclude; and
- A plan for how to ensure the project or project results are sustainable at the end of the commitment.

Managing the Project

Project Management Challenges

Managing a project involving travel to a distant region often presents challenges that are uncommon for a pro bono project in one's home country. Of the challenges identified below, some apply mainly to a cross-cultural scenario, whereas others *(e.g.,* unpredictability) may also apply to local lawyers familiar with the relevant culture and language.

Common challenges may include:

1. *Cultural Differences*

The work may take place in, or with people from, a cultural background that is significantly different from your own. Adjustment of personal style and/or expectations may be necessary to ensure successful communication. For example, in some cultural contexts, goals and feedback may be communicated indirectly, as a highly assertive approach may be viewed as impolite. Some cultures may not immediately respond to emails, and calls or text messaging may be preferable. In some cultures, formality in a professional setting is prized, and a

[13] 2026 Global Pro Bono Guide.

casual communication style may be seen as disrespectful.

Learning about the local culture ahead of time and sharing this knowledge with participating lawyers will significantly improve the experience for all project participants. Consider speaking to others who have worked in the country or region to receive their firsthand insight. Also consider visiting websites dedicated to analyzing cultural differences *(e.g.,* Culture Crossing). Notably, your preferred language may be an individual's third or fourth language. Legal teams are encouraged to consider possible language differences throughout the course of the project.

2. Differences in Legal Systems

Many jurisdictions have hybrid legal systems that combine elements of civil law and common law and may also incorporate customary law, including traditional or Tribal law, as well as religious law, such as Shari'ah. A deep understanding of the legal system in which you will be working will likely prove essential. It should inform staffing choices (*i.e.*, selecting a lawyer from a common-law jurisdiction for a project involving common law). As discussed previously, teams are encouraged to collaborate with or have access to a local lawyer should issues involving local law arise.

3. Unpredictability

Global pro bono work may be unpredictable. The government with which you are working may undergo a significant change in leadership or policy. Public health conditions in the region could also change unexpectedly. You may start working on the project only to discover that your efforts would be better expended pursuing different goals. A balance must be struck between the competing concerns of avoiding "mission creep" (*i.e.*, addressing new requests that distract from your original goal) and the need for flexibility to adjust project goals mid-course if circumstances change significantly. In the initial agreement with the client, consider including a way to end the relationship if unexpected circumstances make the project or relationship untenable.

4. Working with Nonprofit Clients or Collaborators

Particular challenges could arise when working with or for a client in the nonprofit or government sectors. For example, the organization or group may have limited experience working with lawyers and may not initially understand how legal services can support its objectives. The project may involve programmatic staff who use unfamiliar industry jargon or have a different understanding of how to approach a problem. If the organization is small, it may not have adequate resources to manage a relationship with your team, and it may become overwhelmed.

Such possible scenarios underscore the importance of upfront communication and due diligence prior to committing to a project. It may be valuable to take a project development trip to assess capabilities firsthand. During the project, frequent communication with the participating lawyers, client, and collaborators can help ensure that goals remain achievable and that all participating parties are satisfied with progress.

5. Travel Issues

A number of practical considerations arise when sending lawyers to work in unfamiliar regions, particularly when the lawyers' prior international travel experience is limited. Inform travelers of risks well in advance. First and foremost is the issue of safety. Check travel advisories or recommendations concerning country conditions. The US State Department and equivalent ministries in the UK and elsewhere maintain travel information on its website. Concerns could range from theft to political instability or civil unrest. Further, lawyers may encounter different environmental and public-health conditions, including unfamiliar bacteria, diseases, or pollution, which could result in illness. All lawyers traveling to regions in which health risks differ from those at home should visit a travel medicine doctor well in advance to consider whether inoculations or other prophylactic medications are warranted. Ensure all lawyers are aware of the company's insurance coverage in the target region, including emergency evacuation coverage.

6. Ensuring Sustainability

A significant concern when working on projects in regions where your firm or department does not have a presence is ensuring sustainability of the project or the gains made after your team has completed its work. Helping build local capacity is one way to advance this goal. Consider sustainability when designing the project. For example, consider including in the project deliverables the task of helping the client apply for funds to continue the work after your team concludes the engagement.

7. Environmental Impacts

A law firm or legal department may also consider a project's environmental impacts, including emissions or other factors that may be captured in a company's sustainability reporting. Many of the broader engagements discussed in this chapter benefit significantly from, and in some cases depend on, in-person work with clients, collaborators, or stakeholder communities. Traveling to distant areas could lead to significant greenhouse gas emissions. Meanwhile, video conferencing applications such as Zoom and messaging platforms like WhatsApp have made remote communication more accessible and effective in a wide array of situations. Use of these technologies may help limit the travel needed to achieve project goals, thereby reducing the overall emissions associated with a project. On the other hand, use of technologies such as generative artificial intelligence could raise separate environmental impact concerns. When designing a project, it may be helpful to critically assess whether and to what extent travel will help achieve project goals. The impact of travel may also be reduced by sending fewer volunteers for the in-person portion of a project, prioritizing volunteers nearer to the project location, purchasing tickets in a lower class of service, or purchasing emissions offsets, among other strategies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Evaluating Project Progress and Success

Legal teams are encouraged to continually monitor their project's progress to ensure that goals remain achievable and that the client remains satisfied. Determine at the outset the indicators of success, such as timely delivery of a work product, a target number of beneficiaries assisted, or a certain level of capacity built.

Ongoing evaluation throughout the project lifecycle may include regular communication with the client to 1) ascertain whether project goals are being met and whether improvements could be made and 2) frequent communication with participating lawyers, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. Keep a careful record of all deliverables completed and milestones achieved.

2. Post-Project Evaluation

Consider undertaking a comprehensive project review at the end of the engagement. Such a review allows teams to understand successes, challenges, and lessons to be drawn for future projects. When undertaking a review, consider involving third parties. For example, DLA Piper's New Perimeter post-project evaluation process involves one or more outside evaluators who engage in a comprehensive review to assess the project's overall success and its impact on intended beneficiaries.

Additional Examples

The following are additional examples of broader pro bono engagements:

Legislative and Policy Reform

- Through its Emerging Enterprises Pro Bono Program and its Trade for Development Initiative, Sidley Austin lawyers and economists provide pro bono legal and technical services to governments of least developed countries, NGOs, and trade associations on issues related to international trade and rapidly evolving regulations and policies, sustainable development and ESG,

and human rights.[14] Recent representations include advising Antigua & Barbuda before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in an advisory proceeding concerning climate change and its impacts and representing the African Union before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in a parallel proceeding concerning climate change and its effects on the marine environment.

Human Rights and Access to Justice

- New Perimeter has worked with Undikumbukire Project Zambia and Irish Rule of Law International, with funding from A4ID, on a project to support children in the Zambian justice system. The initiative aims to help implement child justice standards, including the requirements under Zambian law that children must be diverted from prosecution wherever possible and must only be detained as a last resort. The team conducted multi-province surveys and stakeholder consultations to identify barriers to diversion, which informed policy recommendations and the delivery of a diversion training workshop for law enforcement.[15]
- Jones Day collaborated with the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery, Bristol Myers Squibb, Chevron, JPMorgan Chase, PayPal, Wells Fargo, and legal departments to create a Global Compendium of the Laws of Human Trafficking. The resource provides standardized summaries of human trafficking laws across global jurisdictions and is designed to serve as a guide for governments and companies engaged in cross-border affairs, as well as a source of sample legislation for governments wishing to develop human trafficking policy.[16]
- DLA Piper has collaborated with Honeywell's legal department to advance access to justice in multiple cities and across several practice areas and service models. The collaboration has extended to Mexico City, where Honeywell and DLA Piper lawyers worked with Appleseed México and Universidad Panamericana to create a legal disaster response brigade aimed at addressing legal vulnerabilities caused by natural disasters. Lawyers developed updated legal guides on earthquake response and other practical tools to support disaster response brigades, and provided training to students, faculty, and volunteers, helping to strengthen emergency preparedness in Mexico City.[17]

Promoting Social and Economic Development

- White & Case collaborated with the government of Bhutan to establish the country's first and only law school, the Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law, whose first class of students matriculated in 2017. The project built on White & Case's years of pro bono service to the Kingdom of Bhutan and included assistance related to the school's curriculum, accreditation, admissions, staffing, and fundraising. [18]
- New Perimeter jointly assisted four international conservation organizations, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, and World Wildlife Fund, to negotiate and draft agreements to execute a debt-for-nature swap between the US and Peru. The deal reduces Peru's debt to the US by more than $20 million, redirecting debt payments to a conservation fund to protect and restore three priority areas in the Peruvian Amazon. The four

[14] Sidley Austin, *Trade for Development Initiative*, https://www.sidley.com/en/probonolanding/trade-for-development-initiative.
[15] New Perimeter, *Enhancing justice for children in Zambia*, https://www.newperimeter.com/our-work/access-to-justice/enhancing-justice-for-children-in-zambia.html.
[16] Jones Day, *The Compendium Project: A Source for Global Anti-Human Trafficking Laws*, https://www.jonesday.com/en/insights/2021/01/the-compendium-project-a-source-for-global-antihuman-trafficking-laws.
[17] Pro Bono Institute, *2026 CPBO Pro Bono Partner Awardee*, https://www.probonoinst.org/events/annual-dinner/2026-cpbo-pro-bono-partner-awardee-honeywell/.
[18] White & Case, *First class: Marking a milestone for Bhutan's first law school*, https://www.whitecase.com/insight-story/2022gcr-first-class.

conservation organizations contributed $3 million to support the deal.[19]

- Working at the micro and macro level, Sidley Austin supports high-impact micro, small, and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs) and drives ecosystem change through key partnerships, with a particular focus on women's economic empowerment, sustainability, and capacity building, training more than 1,000 entrepreneurs annually on key legal topics.[20]

Building Government Capacity

- White & Case has provided in-person and remote trainings to build capacity related to arbitration in Kenya. The firm collaborated with the Nairobi Centre for International Arbitration (NCIA) and the International Senior Lawyers Project to provide a weeklong in-person training on international commercial arbitration and investment law to approximately 30 lawyers in Kenya's Office of the Attorney General and Department of Justice. The firm also worked with NCIA to deliver two remote webinars on related topics to more than 200 virtual attendees.[21]
- Since 2014, New Perimeter has helped build the capacity of government lawyers in East Africa to negotiate transactions and draft agreements governing natural resource use. Through collaboration with the East Africa Development Bank and, subsequently, the Africa Finance Corporation, New Perimeter teams have delivered more than 15 weeklong training workshops to more than 500 lawyers from countries including Botswana, Egypt, Eswatini, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. In recent years, lawyers from a multinational company's legal department have joined DLA Piper lawyers in leading the training.

Representing Governments, International Organizations, or NGOs before International Courts or Bodies

- Law firms have advised the governments of several least developed countries and small island developing countries in international climate change litigation. For example, Debevoise & Plimpton served as lead counsel to the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS), an international organization comprising nine small island nations, regarding its formal request to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for an advisory opinion on states' obligations under public international law regarding climate change, as well as representing COSIS, the Bahamas, Tuvalu, Bangladesh, and the World Health Organization in the advisory proceedings relating to climate change before the International Court of Justice. [22] DLA Piper advised the governments of the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Zambia in similar advisory opinion proceedings before the International Court of Justice.[23] In these landmark cases, pro bono lawyers helped gather and analyze statements from impacted communities and draft submissions articulating the countries' interpretations of existing obligations under customary international law and treaty law.

[19] New Perimeter, *Peru Debt-for-Nature Swap*, https://www.newperimeter.com/our-work/economic-development/peru-debt-swap.html.
[20] Sidley Austin, *Sidley Emerging Enterprises Pro Bono Program,* https://www.sidley.com/en/probonolanding/sidley-emerging-enterprises-pro-bono-program.
[21] White & Case, *Dispute alternatives: Training programs help Nairobi's push to become a preferred venue for dispute resolution*, https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/2023-global-citizenship-review-dispute-alternatives.
[22] Debevoise & Plimpton, *Debevoise Helps Secure Landmark Climate Change Ruling on Behalf of the Commission of Small Island States*, May 28, 2024, https://www.debevoise.com/news/2024/05/debevoise-helps-secure-landmark.
[23] DLA Piper, *DLA Piper advises four developing nations in groundbreaking ICJ Advisory Opinion on climate change responsibility*, July 28, 2025, https://www.dlapiper.com/en/news/2025/07/dla-piper-advises-four-developing-nations-in-groundbreaking-icj-advisory-opinion.