

Participants at the Roundtable.

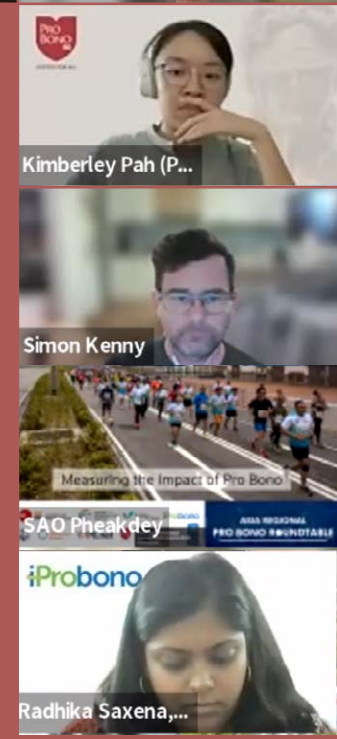
Pro Bono Impact Measurement: Insights from the Asia Pro Bono Roundtable Consortium

By Sue Mahony and Eena Fortun

The Asia Pro Bono Roundtable Consortium consists of a range of organisations engaged in strengthening and expanding pro bono work within the Asia region and globally, including A4ID, the Australian Pro Bono Centre, BABSEACLE, the Center for Reproductive Rights, International Bridges to Justice, iProbono, Legal Empowerment Network, Pro Bono SG (formerly the Law Society Pro Bono Service, Singapore), PILnet, The Global Pro Bono Bar Association, TrustLaw (Thomson Reuters Foundation) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This article provides key insights from a Roundtable hosted by the Consortium in March 2023.

Wisdom is one of the few resources that increases when it is shared. That is the spirit of generosity that underscores the Asia Pro Bono Roundtable Consortium. The Consortium comes together in quarterly Roundtables, uniting members from an array of countries, including Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, Nepal, India and Australia. The Australian Pro Bono Centre is proud to have joined the Consortium in November 2022.

The first Roundtable for 2023, on the theme of Measuring Pro Bono Impact – a Simple Necessity, comprised presentations from TrustLaw, BABSEACLE, A4ID and PILnet. It is worth understanding the various kinds of pro bono work that these organisations undertake to appreciate their valuable insights into impact measurement, including defining and measuring success and collecting the data to make this possible.



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Nattakan Chompathong (Ann) presenting for BABSEACLE.

TrustLaw – The largest global pro bono service provider

TrustLaw facilitates pro bono legal work by over 120,000 lawyers globally. It works with charities, NGOs and social enterprises on a pro bono basis, connecting them with lawyers who are willing to advocate for their causes. It also publishes the TrustLaw Index, a regular report of the volume of pro bono legal work being done across its global network.

The 2022 TrustLaw Index (Index) surveyed 167 law firms in 22 countries in the Asia Pacific Region, recording over 94,000 hours of pro bono legal work with an average of 6.2 hours per lawyer, reflecting a positive trajectory. TrustLaw’s impact analysis through the Index concluded that law firms with at least one element of pro bono infrastructure recorded twice

3 QUICK WINS



TrustLaw slide from the Roundtable: 3 Quick Wins.

as many pro bono hours per lawyer as those which did not. Pro bono infrastructure included:

- pro bono policies;
- a pro bono committee; or
- dedicated pro bono staff.

BABSEACLE – Dynamic training that transforms mentees into mentors

The Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia Community Legal Education Initiative (BABSEACLE), showcased their training project through which judges and experienced lawyers, acting pro bono, educated over 200 students from 31 universities across 12 countries throughout Asia in advocacy and trial skills, legal ethics and the rule of law through mock hearings.

BABSEACLE measured the tangible impacts of the program such as:

- pro bono hours,
- number of student participants, and
- participant satisfaction,

as well as intangible impacts such as:

- increased knowledge and skills of participants,
- likelihood that the volunteers and the student participants will undertake other pro bono activities, and
- improved access to justice outcomes.



A4ID – The value of a flexible impact assessment framework

Advocates for International Development (A4ID) is an international non-profit that channels global legal expertise to organisations that are working to advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One

of A4ID's programs specifically focuses on the rule of law and sources and provides international development opportunities to UK-based lawyers, with over 60 projects currently under way.

The rule of law program measures impact by defining in advance the change or outcome sought, monitoring outputs (such as pro bono hours) but also short- and long-term outcomes and societal effects on community attitudes and the rule of law. A4ID provided a powerful example of pro bono lawyers working to upskill Legal Aid lawyers in Africa who were representing a group of clients facing the death penalty and seeking changes to the law to abolish the death penalty.



Dumisani Gandhi presenting for A4ID.

“Impact measurement need not be a scientific process, but it should be an iterative process that can be progressively improved once an organisation makes a start”

The program's impact was measured through:

- the success of the proceedings, with most defendants granted clemency, creating precedents for future cases,
- the local lawyers' increased skills measured through pre- and post-project surveys,
- Legal Aid's satisfaction with the training provided to the local lawyers, and
- the progress toward abolition of the death penalty including changes in public opinion.

PILnet – Strategies informed by creative data collection

Since 2003, PILnet's work in Asia has supported the creation of vibrant public interest legal networks, pro bono clearinghouses, and national and regional initiatives in three strategic priority areas: civic space, climate justice and refugees and people on the move.

In common with the other organisations, PILnet recommended that, at the beginning of a project, the pro bono provider and their client determine the baseline position and agree what success looks like for the project.

PILnet suggested that to understand the full scope of a project's impact, organisations should collect data from a range of perspectives, including through surveys, feedback, interviews and matter results from:

- the pro bono client,
- the pro bono provider,
- the pro bono provider's team,
- the law firm or company as a whole, and
- societal impact.

As was observed by BABSEACLE's Bruce Lasky in wrapping up the session, impact assessment is a simple necessity that can be based on any type of data. Impact measurement need not be a scientific process, but it should be an iterative process that can be progressively improved once an organisation makes a start. ■

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