



**UNDERSTANDING
INTERNATIONAL PRO BONO
ASSISTANCE: A CASE STUDY
OF NETWORK APPROACHES**



ABOUT ADVOCATES FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Advocates for International Development (A4ID), founded in 2006, is a global charity that believes the law can and should be used more effectively to advance fair and sustainable development. A4ID aims to inspire and enable lawyers to join the global fight to eradicate poverty by advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through A4ID, the world's top lawyers provide free legal support to organisations, working to advance human dignity, equality, and justice. Its work has so far impacted in over 130 countries.

A4ID's Rule of Law Expertise (ROLE UK) Programme is funded by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). It supports partnerships to provide pro bono legal and judicial expertise with the aim to strengthen the rule of law in overseas development assistance – eligible countries. As part of the ROLE UK Programme Knowledge Exchange, A4ID provides the pro bono legal sector with access to targeted and relevant information to inform and improve their technical assistance in development contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

A 2008 Overseas Development Institute (ODI) study for the Danish International Development Agency¹, identified the benefits of a coordinated network approach include synergy, complementarity, economies of scale, division of labour, comparative advantage, coordination, and coherence. The benefits of a coordinated approach to technical assistance are important to realise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are complicated and complex in nature to achieve. The complexities and complicated nature of the SDGs, due to the different socio-political, economic, and cultural context of countries, make a coordinated approach to technical assistance important. The World Bank², sees technical assistance as ‘the transfer or adaptation of ideas, knowledge, practices, technologies, or skills to foster economic development for policy development, institutional development, capacity building, and project or programme support’. This means that technical assistance involves stakeholders working together to the realisation of developmental goals. Similar to traditional development assistance, international pro bono, as a form of technical assistance, involves

multiple actors working in similar geographical areas, providing parallel assistance and developing comparable projects to foster the attainment of the SDGs. The benefits of using international legal pro bono in delivering technical assistance cannot be overemphasised as it highlights the value of network approaches in development. This ensures that stakeholders are able to systematically share ideas and map out strategies that are effective and responsive to the local needs of the community.

Therefore, this paper evaluates the significant value of networks in international pro bono in delivering technical assistance, and examines some of the challenges in promoting and achieving a network-based approach. This research paper is designed to support those involved in international development and pro bono communities to understand how, when, and why a network approach would be useful.

TYPES OF NETWORK APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL PRO BONO

There are different types of network approaches that can be used in effective international pro bono. This section will briefly discuss some of these approaches by outlining their strengths and weaknesses.

CENTRALLY COORDINATED NETWORK

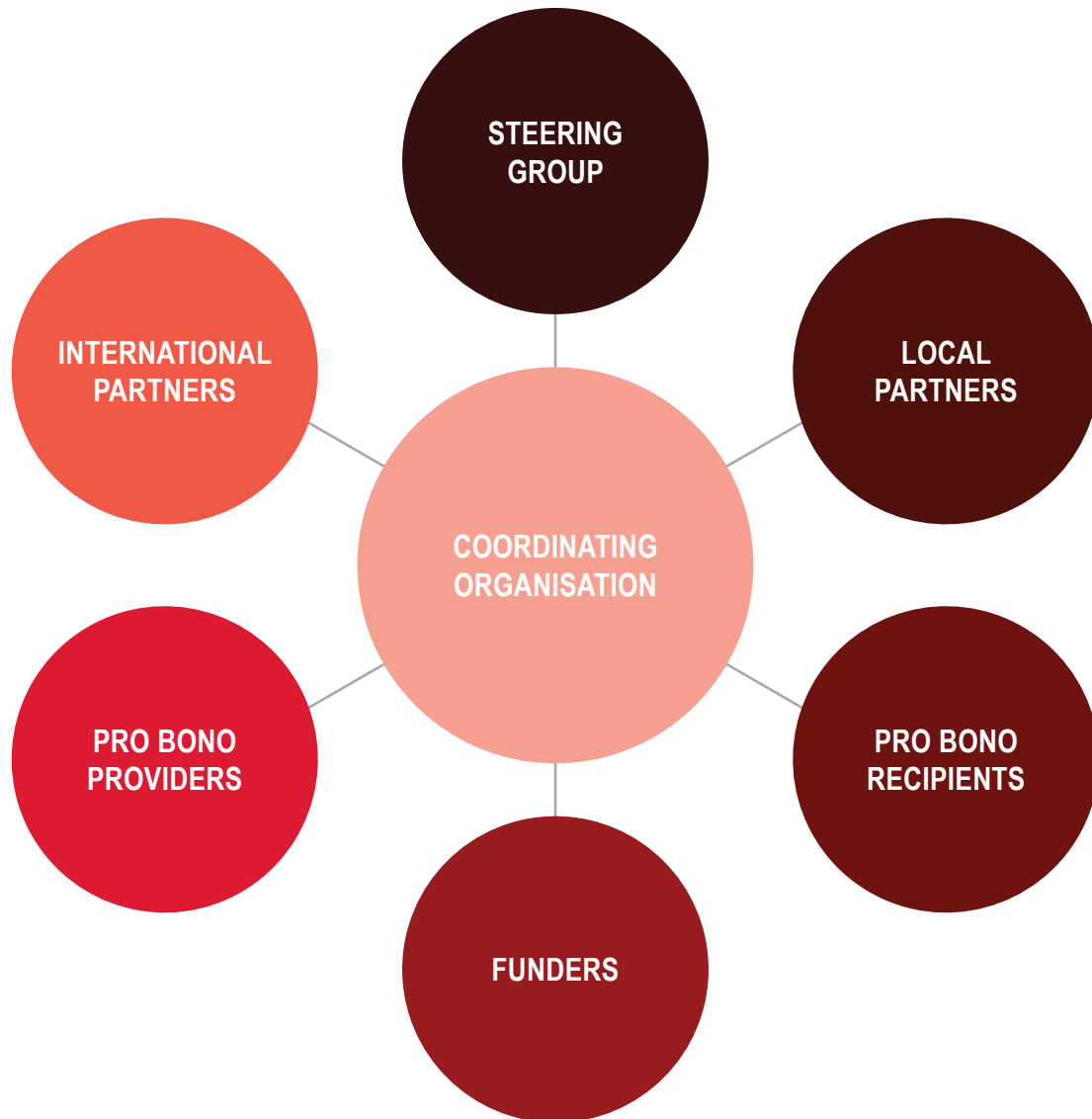
In a Centrally Coordinated Network, members maintain direct relationships with the coordinating organisation but not necessarily with each other.

Facilitating this network and its various interactions is a fundamental part of the coordinating organisation's purpose. Examples of Centrally Coordinated Networks include International Lawyers Project³, Irish Rule of Law International⁴, International Senior Lawyers Project⁵ and Advocates for International Development (A4ID)⁶. Equally, this function can be fulfilled as part of initiatives from global NGOs, law firms, law societies /bar associations, or corporates (such as Trust Law which is part of the Thomson Reuter's Foundation). This kind of network is beneficial as the central coordinating organisation is the go-between for network

members, and is able to quickly access the respective needs of members and respond to the tailored needs of the different members. Activities and programmes by the central coordinating organisation are reflective of the views of members and developed through partnerships, thus, strengthening the relationship that exists between members and the coordinating organisation⁷.



FIGURE 1: AN EXAMPLE OF A CENTRALLY COORDINATED NETWORK STRUCTURE



COLLABORATIVELY COORDINATED NETWORK

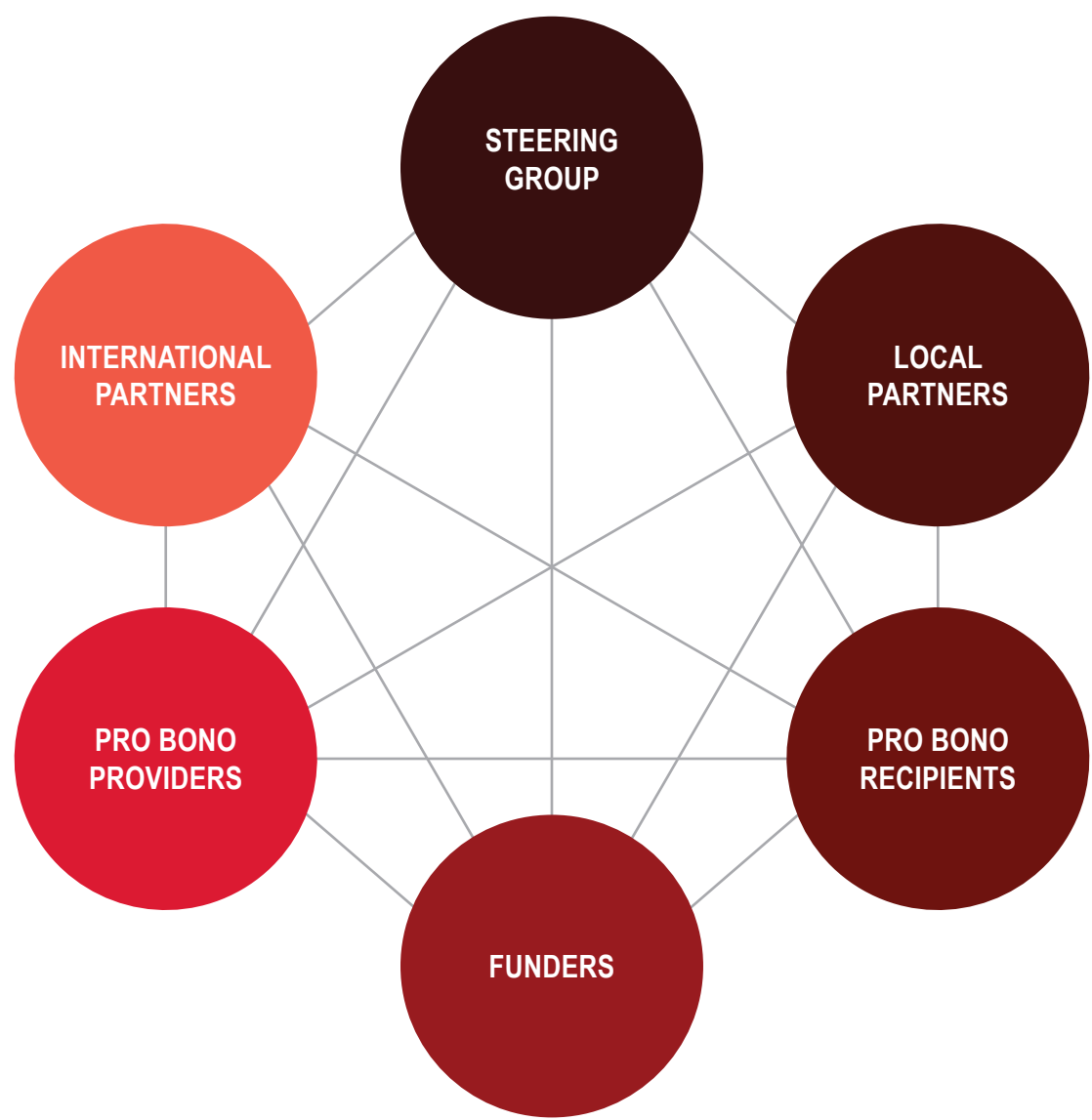
Networks without a specific coordinating body are often a consortium of organisations with their own pro bono capacity, for example, bar associations and law firms. They are connected at multiple

points of the network and facilitate their own interactions directly with each other, co-ordinating the pro bono efforts of different providers to remove duplication of effort and streamline activity for maximum impact. Examples of this type of network are the UK Collaborative Plan for

Pro Bono, the UK In-House Pro Bono Group and the European Pro Bono Group. These networks rely on communication from their constituent entities and on effective coordination of multiple players. This network is beneficial to technical assistance because the pro bono expertise will be effective and timely as all coordinating

members of the consortium are able to pull resources together to meet the immediate needs of the community. Also, such collaboration across members extends the possibility of pro bono beyond cultural boundaries in a swift and efficient way in contrast to one team delivering the pro bono technical assistance.⁸

FIGURE 2. AN EXAMPLE OF A COLLABORATIVELY COORDINATED NETWORK STRUCTURE

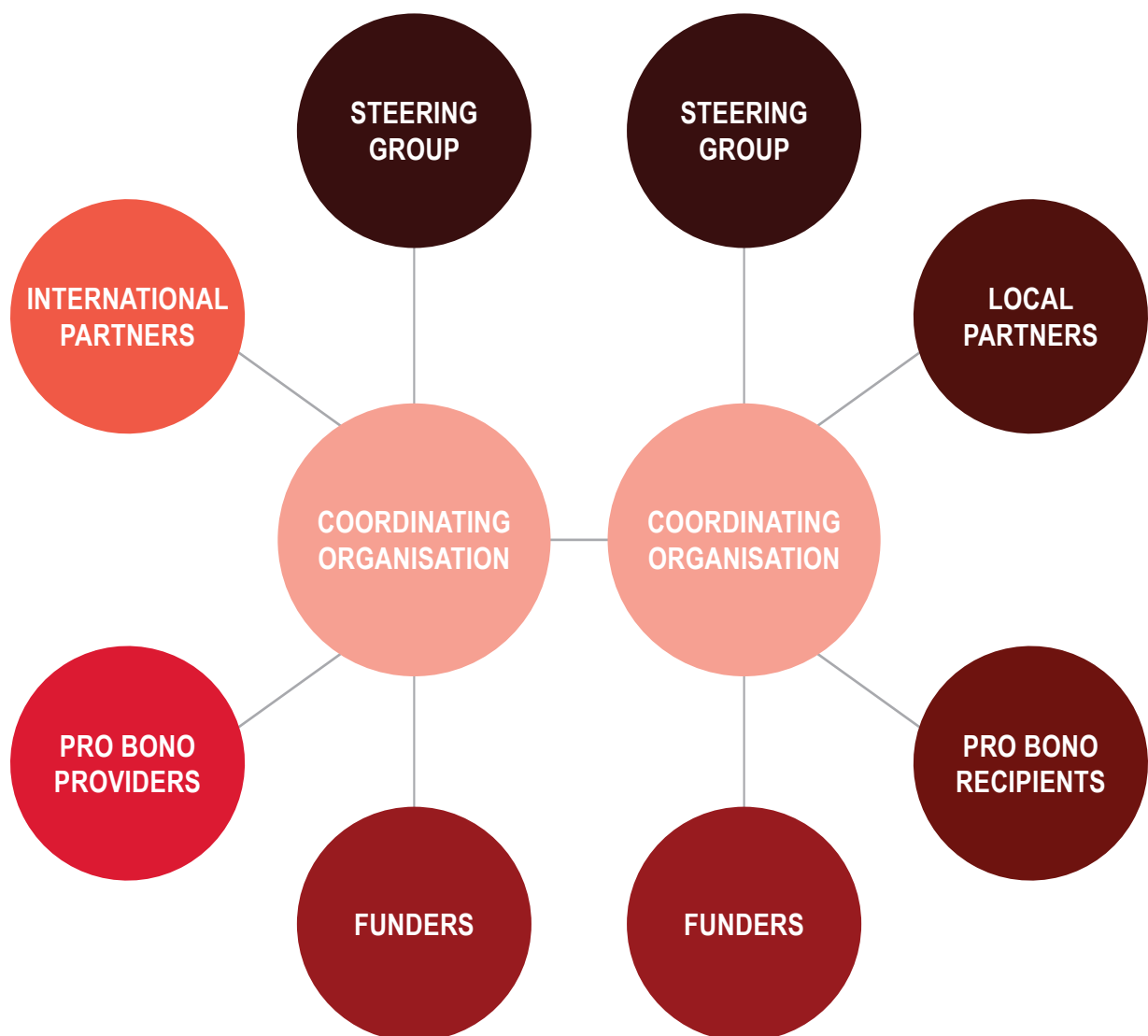


MIRRORED NETWORK

A mirrored network brings together a variety of actors in the legal and justice sectors from both provider and recipient countries around a common project or context. These networks could have counterparts (coordinating

organisations) at both ends of the pro bono network to facilitate exchange and dialogue. These networks may have the characteristics of a Centrally Coordinated or Collaboratively Coordinated Network at either end. An example of one of these networks is the UK Sierra Leone Pro Bono Network.

FIGURE 3. AN EXAMPLE OF A MIRRORED NETWORK STRUCTURE



NETWORK CASE STUDIES

This paper analyses five examples of international pro bono programmes facilitated through network approaches. Drawing on a series of semi-structured interviews, the opinions expressed by participating individuals have been used to highlight different ways to coordinate international pro bono networks, operating in a variety of countries, to progress the rule of law.

ADVOCATES FOR COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES (ACA)

ACA⁹, founded in 2016, is a US and Ghana based coordinating organisation for a network called the Public Interest Lawyering Initiative West Africa (PILIWA). PILIWA have a diverse membership made up of legal organisations (NGOs and law firms) and individual practitioners in nine West African countries of Ghana, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. They focus on public interest legal representation in West Africa with a thematic emphasis on supporting communities threatened by destructive economic development and they assist these communities to pursue their own vision of development.

INTERNATIONAL LAWYERS PROJECT (ILP)

ILP, founded in 2005 and previously known as International Senior Lawyers Project UK, is a US, UK, and Kenyan based organisation providing pro bono legal assistance to governments and civil society organisations in over 80 countries, with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa¹⁰. It focuses on anti-bribery and corruption, tax reform, media freedom, and human rights, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and principles. ILP's pro bono providers are a mix of individual legal practitioners (solicitors, barristers, in-house counsel, and judges) and law firms. ILP's network includes pro bono recipients and local partners, connecting civil society organisations and governments to pro bono providers.

IRISH RULE OF LAW INTERNATIONAL (IRLI)

IRLI is a non-profit rule of law initiative, initially established by the Law Society of Ireland and the Bar of Ireland in 2007¹¹, which has since been joined by the Law Society of Northern Ireland. It focuses on access to justice, institutional capacity building and clinical legal education

in multiple countries across Africa, Asia, and Southern Europe. IRLI's network of pro bono providers includes individual legal practitioners such as judges, barristers, solicitors, academics, and students as well as NGOs and civil society members. The network has staff members in Dublin and offices in Malawi, as well as local partners in Tanzania and South Africa. To provide strategic advice, IRLI has a board of directors with thematically focused sub-committees.

INTERNATIONAL SENIOR LAWYERS PROJECT (ISLP)

ISLP is a US based non-profit that leverages a network of pro bono providers who share their mission of advancing economic development that is more inclusive, just, transparent, and accountable. ISLP work focuses primarily on the Global South with active cases from Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, North Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. ISLP's pro bono providers consist of law firms and individual legal practitioners, typically retired attorneys, who have all expressed a willingness to provide legal support on a pro bono basis. ISLP's pro bono recipient network consists of governments, civil society actors, and social enterprises located in South America, Africa, and Asia. They focus on accountability, anti-corruption, community-inclusive development, investment and trade, media law and freedom

of expression, natural resource management, social enterprises, and tax.¹²

THE UK SIERRA LEONE PRO BONO NETWORK (UKSLPBN)

UKSLPBN provides international pro bono legal services in Sierra Leone. UKSLPBN's volunteer legal network is comprised of UK and Sierra Leonean solicitors, barristers, members of the judiciary, law firms, and prosecutors. Their pro bono recipients are Sierra Leonean government ministries, the wider legal profession, and institutions seeking pro bono assistance. Their dedicated in-country team develops and manages relationships in Sierra Leone, while also working closely with the UK-based steering group and legal experts. UKSLPBN has undertaken judicial case management training, support for the Fast-track Commercial Court, and capacity building for the Sierra Leone judiciary.



CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MOBILISING AN INTERNATIONAL PRO BONO NETWORK

Mobilising a network has its challenges and there is no one recipe for success in building a new one or improving an already-existing network. However, there are lessons to be learnt from the experiences of network coordinating organisations, which might improve the likely success of mobilising an international pro bono network. These considerations are also important when determining areas for expansion and informing the decision of potential members to join. Some of these considerations are equally important when considering new international pro bono work through the use of informal networks.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

Before considering how to provide effective pro bono services to recipients in a different geographic region, members of a network must understand the colonial and historical context of the region they are working in. Recognising these colonial histories as well as the neo-colonial dynamic that is present when Western pro bono experts provide expertise to communities in other regions is an important

starting point of international pro bono work. Failure to do so can alienate local partners and prevent the forming of relationships based on trust within the network. This can also lead to an imposition of ideas or views held by Western pro bono experts on to the local community. Imposed viewpoints fail to recognise the unique socio-political, economic and cultural contexts which will impact on the success of any pro bono activities. An important way to mitigate this is by recognising that most complementary legal systems have been transplanted historically by Western states to further imperial ambitions and may not, therefore, fully fit with the needs or wishes of the local population.

International pro bono networks which work closely with local partners and prioritise their knowledge can ensure greater acknowledgement of these neo-colonial complexities. This understanding is further improved when coordinating organisations have in-country colleagues. Local colleagues can help establish credibility, particularly amongst communities which may find it difficult to trust international organisations due to historical engagements. This

was noted amongst network participants, with an interviewee emphasising the importance of an in-country presence to help effectively communicate in the local context. A local High Court judge was said to have appreciated the differing approach adopted by the network by stating “we like you guys, you don’t come in and tell us what to do. You came in and asked how can we help you?”.

In addition, it is important a network includes partnerships with local lawyers in the recipient’s jurisdiction, as this will not only help ensure that the network is aware of the local content, but will help ensure the network is not taking paid work away from the local industry. Such involvement will address the perception that international experts are taking potential clients and cases from the locals. This is important not only in mitigating the risk of alienating the local legal community from joining the network but ensuring that the local industry is empowered to sustain the necessary long term changes without an overreliance on foreign expertise. For example, ISLP highlight that their assistance is meant to complement and support, not replace, local legal expertise.¹³ This strengthens existing local mechanisms, whilst ensuring that the legal advice provided remains appropriate for the local jurisdiction.

Having a coordinating organisation with an in-country presence can also improve the exchange of information between network members.

IRLI noted how their partners can visit their local office in Malawi and speak to someone in person rather than calling IRLI’s headquarters in Ireland. This gives local organisations ownership of the discussions taking place and shows the coordinating organisation is committed to their work in that jurisdiction. The team are also well-known within the Malawian prison system and can be present in court.

In addition, UKSLPBN’s membership of UK pro bono providers draws heavily on the Sierra Leonean diaspora. As LASER (2015) explained, the Sierra Leone diaspora in the UK have a “foot in both countries” which provides them with broader legal expertise as well as understanding and knowledge of Sierra Leone.¹⁴ As such, these pro bono providers can use their understanding of Sierra Leone’s socio-cultural context to tailor their legal assistance to meet the specific needs of the community.

A CULTURE OF PRO BONO

It is advantageous if the network partners are receptive to pro bono models. For instance, the existence of pro bono departments in law firms, active pro bono work amongst in-house lawyers, pro-bono aligned corporate responsibility objectives, and law society initiatives on pro bono, can be linked to increased receptibility of pro bono culture within the legal profession and society. Networks such as the European Pro Bono Alliance and Asia Pro Bono Exchange

seek to enhance receptibility by promoting pro bono culture among the legal community through sharing of best practices, building alliances and establishing collaborations that will foster a deeper understanding and perspective of pro bono within the network and countries where such networks exist and operate. A growing culture of pro bono within countries is a driving factor to develop pro bono networks in the region and can be beneficial for coordinating organisations to diversify membership. For instance, IRLI explained that there has been a growing culture of pro bono within Ireland and that this culture has been expanded as Ireland opens new embassies around the world due to Brexit. Therefore, utilising changing pro bono and political landscapes can be beneficial for pro bono networks to progress their programming and open opportunities that otherwise did not exist.

Also, ILP have witnessed a growing interest by law firms to undertake pro bono assistance. This coincides with a growing interest by governments and civil society actors to receive such assistance. This shift could highlight better awareness of the potential of pro bono assistance longer-term and attract new members to the network, expanding its impact.

ACCESS TO OTHER NETWORKS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Working in collaboration with other networks in

the same jurisdiction or working on a specific thematic focus is advantageous. This increases the ease of establishing a network through better knowledge of the specific contextual problems at hand, as well as identifying and accessing specific local contacts to assist. For example, before Advocates for Community Alternatives (ACA) was formed, there was a pre-existing entity called The Mano River Union Civil Society and Natural Resource Governance platform, representing a sub-group of countries from the western part of West Africa. As a result of the Mano River Union, groups from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali had already developed a series of case studies on natural resource governance and human rights abuses. ACA was able to leverage this existing local network and knowledge to address the issues confronting the communities.

In establishing strategic partners, it is not only local networks or consortia that can be beneficial, but key change-makers and decision-makers in the local context are also helpful. For example, an interviewee reflected on the benefits of delivering assistance to government ministries as a rapid means for expanding its network. This was because the government was able to create connections between the network and other departments or neighbouring governments to develop strategic relationships. For example, IRLI

have lawyers in Malawi sitting in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Legal Aid Bureau, and the judiciary that can facilitate and drive meaningful changes at a macro level.

Most coordinating organisations interviewed referred to the benefit of a larger organisation which supported their establishment, as this helped them gain credibility and contacts, as well as to provide logistical or technical assistance. ACA explained that its network PILIWA came out of a series of gatherings and workshops that were sponsored by EarthRights International in West Africa. In the case of the UKSLPBN, the summit which culminated in the formation of UKSLPBN was triggered by a request from the former president of the Sierra Leone Bar Association to the Bar Council of the UK. IRLI also benefitted from the support of the Law Society of South Africa, when it began undertaking informal pro bono assistance in the country.

ADOPTING A STRATEGIC APPROACH

Regular and permanent projects can be an impetus for formalising a network. ACA, for instance, explained that when providing ad hoc support, they asked pro bono recipients what further support they required. Recipients consistently asked for there to be a permanent initiative, which will provide strategic direction and solutions to problems. Thus,

highlighting the need for a more formal network and setting up of the coordinating organisation.

UKSLPBN had over 50 UK pro bono providers delivering pro bono services in Sierra Leone before formalising the network and forming a specific coordinating organisation. The Bar Council's Sierra Leone Special Interest Group gathered these providers.¹⁵ UKSLPBN explained that these experiences meant that they understood the issues in the country and had a proven record of delivering positive outcomes, which helped with gaining funding. Furthermore, carefully considering the strategic approach of a pro bono network before launching it can increase the likelihood of sustainability. The formation of UKSLPBN coincided with the 2014 outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone, which significantly hindered their original plans to deliver in-country pro bono services.¹⁶ However, this challenge provided the network with valuable time to build its capacity for crisis response, and reconsider how its work could be more strategic and resilient to adverse force majeure.¹⁷

Focusing on more discrete areas of pro bono support can also enable greater in-depth knowledge and expertise. IRLI discussed how, after years of running pro bono services, it decided to focus more on sustainability and international development principles when forming its strategic plan.

THE VALUE OF INTERNATIONAL PRO BONO NETWORKS

The annual reports of the case study networks demonstrate impactful pro bono work across multiple jurisdictions. Pro bono recipients have also spoken about the value of the case study networks. Therefore, this section explores the benefits of a network for delivery of international pro bono assistance, and the practical and organisational challenges in coordinating an international pro bono network.

BENEFITS OF A NETWORK COLLABORATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Networks often facilitate knowledge sharing between members. One interviewee highlighted how they invite different organisations within their network to present on projects they are working on, giving network members access to information on activities, strategies, and knowledge within the sector. Coordinating organisations are well placed to organise activities such as conferences and webinars that facilitate knowledge sharing, with many pro bono providers and recipient organisations keen to share best practises that they have discovered.

Gaps in knowledge can also be more easily identified and filled through collaboration on a project, as the individual expertise that both parties bring provides a fresh perspective and allows for the pooling of resources and specialisms.

Where a coordinating organisation can identify a valuable connection between different partners within a network, they can facilitate that connection, enabling similarly focused actors across regions to

knowledge share and collaborate. Such will enable these pro bono experts to foster efficient and effective services, thereby reducing duplication of resources and efforts if carried out individually. As one interviewee highlighted, connecting development actors together expands the range of capabilities that can be employed and engaged to serve a common mission. Gaps in knowledge can also be more easily identified and filled through collaboration on a project, as the individual expertise that both parties bring provides a fresh perspective and allows for the pooling of resources and specialisms. This cultivation of strong partnerships and knowledge sharing within a network attracts companies, NGOs, and government departments to join in the initiative and contribute to shared goals.

AWARENESS CREATION

A network can support the development and creation of strong awareness of legal and development issues confronting communities. Such awareness will lead to increased visibility of engaging with the network amongst potential partners as a result of larger, more prominent organisations in the network. An interviewee emphasised the benefits of establishing and developing long-term networks in building legitimacy around the network's aims and activities, whilst also creating the perception of stability and long-term commitment.

There can also be funding benefits of networks through their advocacy. For example, ACA have highlighted that pro bono providers based in West Africa sometimes struggle to obtain direct funding from European and US-based funders, as these funders can find it harder to conduct the normal due diligence assessments at arm's length on these providers. One way coordinating organisations can address this hesitancy from overseas funders is by using their advocacy and awareness creation to support lesser-known in-country organisations. The fact that ACA is vouching for and acting as a coordinator for legal work executed by small organisations in West Africa, has helped instil funder confidence in the ability of these smaller, local providers to drive impact.

DEMAND LED

Networks which actively include pro bono recipients and local partners in strategy and planning, have shown to increase the quality of international pro bono efforts. Pro bono networks are particularly able to ensure that work is focused on the interests and aims of specific pro bono recipients, through an in-country presence and local partnerships. For example, ACA stated that their network, and the interventions they undertake, are led by what their members consider high priorities, rather than by ACA dictating which issues are important and acting

on them. ACA aims to design projects collaboratively with partners, outlining the assistance they can provide and working alongside partner organisations to decide on joint programming needs based on shared priorities, missions and values.

There is a broad consensus among those interviewed for this paper that networks should provide services which are tailored and developed for the specific needs of each individual recipient. Coordinating organisations need to ensure this approach is consistently adopted. They must mitigate against the possibility of external organisations taking actions based on what they perceive to be the needs of the recipient and local partner organisations. This can be done, for example, through training and ongoing support between network partners as they share ideas, knowledge, and good practices.

INCREASING PRO BONO PROVISION

As a network progresses, awareness of pro bono can evolve, including increased understanding of the beneficial nature of pro bono, as well as ideas on how this work should be implemented. The network can raise awareness of its pro bono activities to potential providers and recipients who have not previously engaged with pro bono provision to build enthusiasm and trust, establishing a

culture for this kind of assistance. Networks can particularly encourage greater engagement by pro bono providers without staff internally dedicated to managing delivery, where smaller, informal networks are available to support.

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MINIMISING DUPLICATION

A number of interviewees noted that the use of a network reduces the possibility of running duplicate services and thereby improves efficiency and effectiveness of shared or similar

projects. One interviewee highlighted their coordinating organisation's practice in keeping a record of all cases and projects assigned to each pro bono provider. This aimed to minimise duplication of effort. Another interviewee explained that network members will often collaborate where there is a convergence in projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

A significant benefit of a Centrally Coordinated network is the importance it plays in maintaining partnerships overtime. As one interviewee highlighted, partnerships and projects can often be maintained as they develop, because pro bono recipients can keep utilising different aspects of their network to support their ever-changing needs. Because networks are made up of individual organisations seeking to promote and achieve pro bono culture, they are able to fill any gap or address problems that may arise in a more efficient and effective manner than when it's just a single entity.

CHALLENGES OF A NETWORK CONSISTENCY AND MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

There is a need to provide consistent, high quality pro bono services. If a part of the network fails to complete an activity or deliver an activity,

this can significantly undermine the reputation of the entire network. Due to the different socio-political and economic contexts in which coordinating organisations operate, it might be difficult in some instances for these networks to provide consistent and efficient services that meet the expectations of their recipients. Factors such as an unstable environment and being under-resourced could hinder these coordinating organisations to act and mobilise their networks consistently, thus, resulting in the prioritisation of other activities and projects over others. This may risk their credibility within the local community. For instance, an interviewee highlighted that they have experienced pro bono lawyers prioritising other responsibilities sometimes. It is imperative for pro bono providers and coordinating organisations to maintain consistent communication with recipient organisations, and local and international partners as such communication and openness will help explain why certain activities are prioritised over others.

Conversely, if coordinating organisations fail to consistently assign pro bono providers interesting work, maintain relevant partnerships, or offer collaboration and knowledge sharing opportunities, there is a danger that pro bono stakeholders may question their part in the network. This can be mitigated by the coordinating organisations gaining an understanding from pro bono providers about their areas of expertise and particular interests.



Factors such as an unstable environment and being under-resourced could hinder these coordinating organisations to act and mobilise their networks consistently, thus, resulting in the prioritisation of other activities and projects over others.

Similarly, coordinating organisations often face very high expectations from local communities when receiving pro bono services. Pro bono recipients were cited by interviewees as underestimating political difficulties arising from national legislation and/or public policy which can significantly impede the progress of initiatives.

Challenges in managing expectations were also noted where recipients were less versed in the limits of international pro bono work, for example, the scope of assistance on offer was unclear.

INFRASTRUCTURE OF RECIPIENT ORGANISATIONS

Frequently, pro bono recipients within international pro bono networks lack sufficient infrastructure to facilitate and support projects. Despite eagerness from pro bono recipients and local partners to commence programmes, they may lack several elements their organisation needs for these programmes to run successfully. This can range from a lack of resource or funding, relevant experience (for example, in public advocacy work), or a lack of IT infrastructure or no access to the internet. The effective running of a network within the development sector requires various support structures to compensate for these issues.

MEASURING IMPACT

Several interviewees highlighted the difficulties faced when ascertaining whether the project had been effective in meeting its objectives. Many objectives which coordinating organisations set out to achieve are intrinsically challenging to measure, for example, seeking to measure change in institutional behaviour and public

confidence in institutions. Similarly, other interviewees cited how parameters such as economic governance and cultural perceptions of local lawyers cannot be easily quantified. One interviewee highlighted that this can frustrate funders, where impact is measured against specific outcomes, notwithstanding the difficulties of obtaining or measuring this data in a crisis environment, let alone ensuring its accuracy. These coordinating organisations also often struggle to portray short-term results or achievements in longer-term projects to funders who are not very familiar with their projects. This exacerbates challenges for coordinating organisations seeking funding.

FUNDING AND RESOURCES

A lack of diverse funding streams can prevent pro bono networks from expanding. IRLI stated that despite its increasing potential and possibilities, it does not have enough funding to hire sufficient team members to implement new projects. It also highlighted that funding partners may be deterred to contribute financially where there are no other backers of the project. For example, the Irish government expressed an interest in funding IRLI but was hesitant about the risks of being the only funder involved. Another interviewee in Malawi expressed that the lack of funds prevented its network from expanding outside the central region of Lilongwe. Indeed,

IRLI attested to partners in Malawi being keen for more engagement with sufficient demand for pro bono services, but, without greater funding to facilitate projects with greater scope or broader geographical remits, it was difficult to meet the demand.

However, in as much as funding is key to a network's ability to mobilise and act on the needs of local communities, the capacity to deliver on projects is central as there may be a risk of blockages if a coordinating organisation is not sufficiently resourced to facilitate partnerships or match recipients with suitable providers. One interviewee highlighted that, whilst networks often receive a lot of expressions of good intentions to collaborate, they can also often fail to come to fruition due to the lack of available funding and resourcing.



CONCLUSIONS

The benefits of coordinating assistance efforts through a network approach are well established in the international development sector. However, legal pro bono delivery on an international level brings with it a unique set of challenges, due to the nature of legal services and the wide variety of actors. Exploring how a network can assist with coordinating the delivery of international pro bono helps to consider the possibilities and limitations of these networks.

There are considerable benefits of Collaboratively Coordinated Networks, such as promoting greater collaboration, increased control by members over the network activity and inclusivity.¹⁸ However, the most common formal network in international pro bono is the Centrally Coordinated Network structure. The reason for this could be the dedicated resource for the coordination of such large cross-jurisdictional networks, due to funding or because collaborative coordination between different institutions depends on the capacity and will of those institutions, which may also conflict with other organisational pressures. As a result of the prevalence of the Centrally Coordinated Network structure in international

pro bono, this paper took a more in-depth look at the Centrally Coordinated Network through narrative case studies, however, further in-depth evaluation of the Collaboratively Coordinated Network would be interesting to explore further.

When delivering international pro bono, it is vital any network is conscious of the cultural and legal context of the local jurisdiction. It is important that all members are aware of the needs and issues of all members. This can be achieved through effective communication by the coordinating organisation, knowledge sharing, and encouraging direct relationships. A coordinating organisation with a presence in both the jurisdiction of delivery and provision greatly assists an understanding of both jurisdictions within the network. For example, it assists with:

- the sharing of information regarding the local context to funders, international partners and pro bono providers
- relationship building
- understanding the pro bono providers' areas of expertise

- building trust with recipients
- more effective communication, which in turn helps when managing the expectations of pro bono recipients

International pro bono networks should not work in silos and can always be strengthened through widening local and international partnerships,

tapping into other networks operating in the same areas, increasing membership and broadening expertise. Having a formal network with brand power and a well-resourced coordinating organisation helps enable a network to better serve all its members, particularly the recipients, whose needs should ultimately be the primary focus of any assistance delivery network.



END NOTES

¹ [Discussion Paper \(oecd.org\)](#)

² World Bank (1997) Managing Technical Assistance in the 1990s: Report of the Technical Assistance Review Task Force'. Washington DC: World Bank.

³ See www.internationallawyersproject.org for more details about the organisation.

⁴ See www.irishruleoflaw.ie for more details about the organisation.

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⁶ See organisation website www.a4id.org for more information about the organisation

⁷ Innovations for Development and South-South Cooperation (n/d). The Coordination Network Between Actors Involved in the Development of Mutual Health Organisations in Western and Central Africa. <http://www.ilo.org>

⁸ See Dusdal, Jennifer and Powell, Justin (2021). Benefits, Motivations and Challenges of International Collaborative Research: A Sociology of Science Case Study. Science and Public Policy, 48 (2): 235-245.

⁹ See website of organisation for further details Home - Advocates for Community Alternatives (advocatesforalternatives.org)

¹⁰ <https://www.internationallawyersproject.org/about-us>

¹¹ See website for more details: [Irish Rule of Law International](#)

¹² <https://islp.org/>

¹³ islp.org/our-work/

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¹⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/591d6c2940f0b63e0b00004b/sl-pbn-case-study_24-august_final.pdf page 2 and Herbert Smith Freehills' Fair Deal Sierra Leone Project, Project Umubano1 and the Bar Council's Sierra Leone Special Interest Group.

¹⁶ UKSLPBN paper

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Keith G. Provan, Patrick Kenis, Modes of Network Governance: Structure, Management, and Effectiveness 2007

