



The Law Society
of England and Wales

Championing justice

We at the Law Society believe that the legal profession in general and solicitors specifically have a clear role to play in championing the values and concepts of: justice, fairness, equity and legitimacy. We aim to promote the values and principles that underpin the legal profession by:

Supporting the legal profession in upholding the rule of law, advocating access to justice and promoting and protecting human rights.

The Law Society has been carrying out externally-funded project work for the best part of a decade. During this time we have received substantial grants from development agencies and government, and worked in partnership with bar associations/NGOs and overseas governments to deliver projects which promote and protect human rights; support the rule of law and access to justice; and encourage economic development. See overleaf for examples of some of our international work.

Our involvement in such projects can take many forms. This can range from: working with local NGOs in managing direct service delivery; the provision of short and long term expert consultancy work; research and policy recommendations to government; and delivery of training and seminars for lawyers and the legal profession.

We undertake this work because we believe that upholding the rule of law, advocating access to justice and promoting and protecting human rights serves both the interests of our members, and the legal profession globally, and we believe that it is in the common interests of the legal profession throughout the world to promote the public interest role that lawyers can and should play in society.

Making legal institutions accessible and responsive to all, including the underprivileged, is a central challenge to the legal profession. Lawyers have a key role to play in helping to build and establish lasting structures, processes and institutions that are built on the values and principles that underpin the legal profession.

Leading by example

We promote human rights worldwide

We raise awareness of human rights, international standards and conventions and lobby for better adherence to international law in practice. We respond to individual breaches of human rights suffered by lawyers in the course of their work.

We uphold the rule of law and access to justice

We design and implement projects that aim to support developing legal systems and professions abroad.

“An effective legal and judicial system is not a luxury but a key component of a well-functioning state and an essential ingredient in long-term development.”

James Wolfensohn - former President of the World Bank

Promoting the rule of law worldwide

The Law Society has supported the development of effective legal and judicial systems around the world. These are just some examples.

Nigeria Law Project

In 2000, the Law Society entered into partnership with a Nigerian NGO, the Legal Defence and Assistance Project, to develop a duty solicitor scheme (DSS) in 10 states. The scheme provided free legal representation to those held on remand in prison, many of whom had been detained for several years without trial, due to the lack of a functioning legal aid system to provide representation.

During the first phase of the Nigeria Law Project saw:

- Over 400 lawyers recruited and trained
- 10,700 cases handled between 2000-2002.
- 85% of cases resulting in bail being granted
- A 10% reduction in the prison population
- An annual directors of public prosecution forum established
- Appointment of partner to a law reform committee
- Appointment of LEDAP to chair a national committee to review criminal procedure laws
- Recommendation that the duty solicitor scheme be replicated across Nigeria as a model of securing justice

The second phase of the project (2006-09) has expanded the scheme to 15 states providing 65,000 days of pro bono representation. 750 lawyers will participate and be given training in human rights law. Three of the state governments have put staff on secondment to coordinate the programme in steps towards the institutionalisation of the DSS model at state level.



Lawyers meet prison officials in Nigeria to promote legal aid via the duty solicitor scheme

Uganda Legal Aid Project

The Law Society worked in partnership with the Legal Aid Project of the Uganda Law Society to strengthen its capacity to offer wider and more effective free legal services to those who need it. This involved: advocacy and mediation skills training to legal aid providers; increased awareness of international human rights instruments and their domestic application; training of trainers to enhance the dissemination and sharing of information on issues of mutual concern and improve the ability of the Project staff to use the information acquired to address their clients' needs effectively and appropriately.

Turkey

A partnership between the Union of Turkish Bar Association and the Law Society of England and Wales to: raise awareness of the European Union and the accession process in Turkey among the legal profession; increase the professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness of legal services across Turkey to EU standards; promote cross-border co-operation between the Turkish Bar Association and counterparts across EU member states; enhance the capacity of bar associations at national and local level to facilitate access to information on EU and accession-related issues relevant to their members.

Antigua

This project aimed to improve access to justice in Antigua and Barbuda by strengthening the institutional capacity of the Legal Aid and Advice Centre to undertake and deliver its services to meet the needs of the poor with no access to representation. The objectives of the project were to: build the strategic planning skills to ensure long term sustainability of the centre; provide information to the public on basic legal rights and access to justice; improve client care and case management abilities of centre staff; build local capacity by training trainers to train members of the pool of private lawyers volunteering to assist in cases.

China

The Lord Chancellor's Training Scheme for Young Chinese Lawyers is a successor scheme to the highly successful Practical Training Scheme for Young Chinese Lawyers. It aims to: give Chinese lawyers an understanding of English law and the English legal system; provide an introduction to the practice of English law in contentious and non-contentious work; and to provide Chinese lawyers with an insight into the management and organisation of legal practice in both solicitors' firms and barristers' chambers.

Middle East

We ran a series of international training programmes for Arab lawyers in eight countries - Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia. This included training on: international law including international trade agreements and trade law; international legal practice; transactions and skills; international standards for judges, lawyers and prosecutors; international human rights and English legal terminology



Russian lawyers and representatives of the Russian Federal Chamber of Advocates at a practice management conference

Russia

A legal co-operation partnership with the Russian Federal Chamber of Lawyers to contribute to the effective and efficient provision of legal services in Russia by the institutional development of the bodies that represent and regulate the legal profession. Activities included: a study visit to the UK to explore models of regulation and representation; a conference in Moscow to present results and examine best practice for the legal profession in Russia; the production of a toolkit on legal practice; the establishment of a twinning programme between regional chambers in Russia and local law societies in England and Wales.

Libya

In recognition of the importance of legal reform to its economic reform agenda we were invited to lead a steering committee to review legislation and procedures on banking, commercial and dispute resolution. We recommended policy options to ensure that legislation provided a more enabling business and investment environment.

Supporting human rights cases

The case studies that follow indicate how the Law Society can lend its support to human rights cases.

In March 2007 the Law Society wrote to Russian authorities expressing grave concern that due process had not been observed by the Prosecutor General's Office in its criminal proceedings against English solicitor and Law Society member **Timothy Osborne**. Mr Osborne was investigated for embezzlement and money laundering under the Russian Criminal Code. However he was given no formal notice of the accusations against him - instead the investigation was announced on the prosecutor general's website. The delay in bringing charges or dropping the public allegations against him prevented him from effectively carrying out his practice as a lawyer. His freedom to travel abroad was also curtailed by the possibility of extradition to Russia from a third country.

In July 2007 the Law Society wrote to Chinese authorities to express its concern about lawyer **Chen Guangcheng**. Chen Guangcheng is currently serving a four year prison sentence in Linyi City Prison in the Shandong Province for "wilfully harming public property" and "inciting disruption of transport". However the real reason for his detention is understood to have been his legitimate work assisting villagers in taking action against Linyi City authorities for carrying out forced sterilisations and abortions. Blind since birth, Mr Chen requires the assistance of his wife or lawyer in order to draft an appeal to the provincial higher court. However his visitation rights are restricted to thirty minutes per month, rendering it impossible to effectively appeal his sentence. He is also reported to have been severely beaten in detention and denied medical treatment.

In August 2007 the Law Society wrote to Honduran authorities to add its voice to international pressure for an investigation into the murder of labour rights lawyer **Dionisio Díaz García**. Mr Diaz Garcia was shot dead on his way to court after receiving death threats related to his representation of security guards in cases against their economically and politically mighty employers. The Honduran government failed to respond appropriately to requests for his protection before the murder last December, for an investigation into this murder, and for protection of his surviving colleagues. Members of the international department met Honduran delegates at Amnesty International UK to discuss this case as well as the pressures on the human rights in Honduras more generally, and to explore ways in which the legal community here might be able to lend support to the Honduran cause.

The Law Society wrote on several occasions in 2005 and 2006 to General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on behalf of British citizen **Mirza Tahir Hussain**. Mr Hussain had been held on death row in Pakistan for 18 years for murdering a taxi driver in 1988. He had initially been cleared by the Lahore High Court in 1996. However, an Islamic Sharia court re-heard the case on the grounds that it had jurisdiction over a crime of robbery with murder. This was despite the previous finding by the High Court that there was no robbery. The Sharia court imposed the death penalty. On 16 November 2006, General Musharraf commuted Mr Hussain's sentence. Mr Hussain was released a few days later and is now back in Britain.

Did you know?

65% of solicitors in England and Wales have taken part in pro bono work during their careers.

In the last 12 months approximately £338m worth of pro bono work was provided by solicitors.

82% of solicitors 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that pro bono work enhanced the reputation of the profession.

Special thanks to all our supporters and in particular we would like to thank:

British Council
Commonwealth Scholarship Commission
Ministry of Justice
Department for International Development
European Commission
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Troicaire
Law Society Charity
Millennium Challenge Corporation
Westminster Foundation for Democracy

“You must uphold the rule of law and the proper administration of justice.”

From Rule 1 of the Solicitors' Code of Conduct 2007 (England and Wales)



Ed Nally, former president of the Law Society, and Vietnamese Ministry of Justice officials at a workshop to redraft the Vietnamese code of conduct for lawyers

How you can help

We are always looking for solicitors and lawyers to participate in international projects. Valuable input includes short or long term consultancy, provision of expert advice, training, policy recommendations and research. So whatever your background is, if you are interested in international work sign up now.

By getting involved you could:

- be part of the International Action Team and draft interventions on behalf of individuals and groups whose rights are being violated
- draft Amicus Curiae briefs, third party interventions or observations in cases before the UK, US, European and other courts
- keep up to date on human rights issues by signing up to our e-alerts and regular newsletter
- write articles for the Law Society's newsletter or e-alerts
- attend human rights events and training seminars arranged by the Law Society or advertised on its website and newsletter
- apply for human rights/development jobs, placements, internships or study opportunities advertised on the Law Society's website and newsletter
- join our monitoring teams to track developments in the law and human rights at home and abroad
- contribute to the debate by posting your comments on our forum
- assist in reviewing proposed legislation that may have an impact on human rights
- consult with charities and NGOs, and lobby UK or foreign governments on human rights issues
- participate in our annual essay competition for students, trainees and junior solicitors
- partner and collaborate with charities and NGOs on international projects
- be a trial observer on behalf of the Law Society in other jurisdictions to monitor compliance with international standards
- become a member of our human rights monitoring team
- learn how to twin your local law society with partners overseas.

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