

Celebrating Pro Bono Contributions

By Margaret Fish, Grants & Communications Manager

On 11 February 2026 the Joburg office held its annual Pro Bono Award Ceremony to thank the legal professionals who went the extra mile in 2025 to assist the poor and vulnerable. The event was generously hosted by Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr in their Sandton auditorium.

We were honoured to have Justice Albie Sachs give a very moving and heartfelt keynote address. In sharing some of his experiences under Apartheid, he said it is important to remember how much has changed since those times, and that much will still change in the years to come, hopefully for the better.

In this issue

- Joburg Pro Bono Awards
- PILnet Comes to Cape Town
- Children's Court Practice Workshop
- Work Experience at ProBono.Org
- Staff News – farewells and newcomers

2025 Johannesburg ProBono.Org Awards



Photo: Yolanda van der Stoep

2025 Johannesburg Pro Bono Awards

Child Law

Award: Chantal Christofi-Brites of Farinha, Ducie, Christofi Attorneys.

Special Mentions were given to Elmari Richter of Van Velden-Duffey Inc. Rustenburg, Elgene Roos of Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr Inc. and Kruger Engelbrecht Attorneys.

Labour Law

Award: Adv Evelyn Mogolane.

Special Mentions went to Maponya Attorneys and Ronelda Cooray of RVS Attorneys

Family Law

Award: Maponya Attorneys.

Madiba & Co and Ricki Starke received Special Mentions

Domestic Violence

Award: Fasken

Special Mentions: Adv. Mpho Hlahane and Adv. Ntombi Mpofo

Housing

Award: Themba Khumalo, Eversheds Sutherland

Special Mentions: The Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr team of Gift Xaba and Pabetsi Letsoalo; and Bowmans

Strategic Litigation

Award: Bowmans

Deceased Estates

Award: Adv Boitumelo Rampete

Special Mention: The Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr team of Emily West, Danine Steyn, Ashleigh Solomons and Sian Williams

Deeds & Conveyancing

Award: Chipu Attorneys and Conveyancers

Special Mentions: Masetshaba Modise of Mashitsho Attorneys and Douglas Tatham of Norton Rose Fulbright SA Inc., Durban

Community Advice Office

Award: Tumi Mthombeni of the Thusang Morwalo Advice Office in Kagiso

Most Interesting Webinars

Jacques Marais, Marlie Roode and Lara Bezuidenhoudt of Fasken

The Most High Impact Case

Tumisang Mngase and Chigo Mabila of DLA Piper Attorneys

The Most Active Newcomers

Mathiba M Attorneys, Gumede N Attorneys and Attorney Di Gibson.

It was noted that these are all sole practitioners!

Refugees Award:

Ntokozo Gumede of Gumede N Attorneys

Special Mentions: Virginia Sekgothe of VS Attorneys, and Fasken

Advocate Award The Johannesburg Society of Advocates

Best All-Rounder Fasken

Outstanding Student At a University Law Clinic

Devon Nyl, University of Pretoria Law Clinic

Special Awards for Client Support

A B Moosa, Avalon Cinema Group

The Empire Partner Foundation

The Spar Group

Spiritual Chords

Ashraful Aid

Consortium for Refugees & Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA)

Congratulations to all these worthy firms and individuals who make our work possible.

Grateful thanks to our sponsors: Spier and AJS Business Management Systems, to our MC Jack Devnarain, and to Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr Inc.

Special thanks to our Communications Volunteer, Precious Masenya, who worked very hard to help make this event such a success.

PILnet Global Forum comes to Cape Town

By Daphne Makombe, Legal Consultant



For the first time on the African continent, PILnet's Global Forum will be held in Cape Town from 10 - 12 November 2026. The Forum brings together lawyers, in-house counsel, bar associations, civil society organisations, and academics from around the world to examine how pro bono and public interest lawyering can be used to support civil society and strengthen access to justice. Through interactive sessions, structured networking, and informal exchanges, the Forum creates space for practitioners and organisations to form practical collaborations that extend beyond the event itself.

ProBono.Org has been an instrumental partner in bringing the Global Forum to South Africa, and the Forum presents a timely opportunity to formally launch the proposed collaboration. Hosting the Forum in Cape Town reflects PILnet's recognition of Southern Africa as a region with deep experience in pro bono and public interest law, as well as unresolved questions about how legal support can more effectively serve civil society organisations beyond individual representation.

PILnet considers this Forum a deliberate entry point into the Southern African pro bono ecosystem as it provides an opportunity to listen to regional actors, elevate locally grounded perspectives, and advance more focused conversations on how legal tools can support civil society organizations, civic space, and public interest work in practice. It also allows PILnet to introduce its CSO-focused pro bono model in dialogue with existing institutions, and positions this collaboration as complementary, locally anchored, and shaped by regional priorities from the outset.

Children's Court Workshop: Building Confidence and Competence in Practice

By Adv Elsabe Steenhuisen, Child Law Project (OCAY)



Photograph by Precious Masenya

Legal practitioners are increasingly called upon to assist in Children's Court matters, often with limited exposure to the unique procedures, statutory framework, and practical realities of this forum. To support attorneys in developing the necessary skills and confidence, ProBono.Org's One-Child-A-Year (OCAY) project hosted a practice-orientated workshop on 30 January 2026.

This interactive workshop was designed to upskill legal practitioners who are new to Children's Court practice, as well as those seeking to deepen their understanding of the process. The focus was on the most common scenarios encountered in practice, with practical guidance on what to expect when accepting Children's Court matters and how to prepare effectively. The workshop was presented by Elsabe Steenhuisen and Daphne Makombe, experienced members of the OCAY team.

Session 1 began with an overview of how OCAY staff engage with practitioners, including what attorneys can expect when receiving a case memorandum or brief, and the practical next steps to be taken. Participants received an explanation of the relevant legislative framework, including the Children's Act, the applicable regulations, and prescribed forms. The session covered the types of matters a Children's Court may adjudicate (section 45), as well as the orders it may make (section 46).

The process of initiating Children's Court proceedings was explained in detail, including applications in terms of sections 22(4)(b), 23, 24, 26(1)(b), and 28, with specific reference to Form 2 of the Justice Regulations in the Children's Act.

Attention was given to the contents of a Children's Court file, the role of the designated social worker, and the involvement of other interested parties.

Session 2 focused on substantive issues central to Children's Court practice, including the best interests of the child, child participation, and children in need of care and protection. The session further addressed parental responsibilities and rights, parenting plans, parental responsibilities and rights agreements, and the position of unmarried fathers under the Act.

The training ended with a question-and-answer session, allowing participants to clarify practical concerns and engage directly with the presenters and other experienced colleagues present.

After lunch, representatives from Constitution Hill – Heritage, Education and Programmes, Lerato Sehume and Zwi Ramashia, who earlier had introduced their work, took the attendees on a scheduled site tour of the Old Women's Jail and the Constitutional Court.

This workshop offered an invaluable opportunity for practitioners to strengthen their Children's Court practice and contribute meaningfully to the protection and promotion of children's rights.



Course

Applied Legal Project Management



We know legal professionals who perform at their best uplift businesses, create jobs, and strengthen families, creating a ripple effect across society.

But... are you feeling overwhelmed by deadlines, emails, and heavy workloads?

Legal Project Management ("LPM") is more than just efficiency—it is your key to flourishing!



- Gain control over your workload
- Become the changemaker you were born to be
- Improve your work-life balance

We are South Africa's only accredited provider for the International Institute of Legal Project Management. Join a global community of legal professionals in 50+ countries and stand out from the crowd as a trusted professional!

[Start for Free with our LPM 101](#)



 info@pocketadvisor.co.za
 <https://pocketadvisor.co.za/legal-project-management/>

 **Free e-Book**

Work Experience at ProBono.Org – 24 November to 5 December 2025

By Thekgo Shakoane



Embarking on this opportunity filled me with a mixture of nerves, excitement, and optimism for my future career in the legal profession. One of the most striking aspects of my experience was witnessing the dedication and work ethic of the staff members at ProBono.Org. Observing their commitment made it clear that the legal environment is a demanding and fast-paced world - one that requires diligence, adaptability, and the readiness to confront any challenge. Although this was my first experience in a professional legal setting, it proved to be the best work experience I have had. The exposure was both challenging and rewarding, leaving me more confident and better prepared to handle professional responsibilities going forward.

Throughout my placement, I learned a great deal about myself. I discovered that despite frequently doubting my own abilities, I am capable of far more than I often acknowledge. This experience served as a necessary reminder that success is attainable when one applies consistent effort and determination. The workload was demanding and constant, especially during high-pressure periods, but this taught me valuable lessons about responsibility and perseverance. While the staff were supportive and approachable, they maintained a firm expectation that we were there to work with professionalism and commitment.

From the moment I arrived, I received a warm welcome from the team. They were eager to introduce me to various aspects of legal practice and to contribute to my growing knowledge base. My exposure included attending my first Constitutional Court hearing, participating in a parenting plan programme, conducting client consultations, and performing administrative duties such as filing and document management.

The skills I developed ranged from basic office functions to more complex legal tasks. One of the most significant experiences was attending a Constitutional Court hearing involving the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and AfriForum, a matter concerning access to borehole water by farm dwellers. Although it was challenging to capture every detail of the proceedings, observing the arguments firsthand was invaluable. Conducting consultations initially intimidated me, but after my first solo session, I grew more confident and comfortable. I also found the parenting plan programme particularly meaningful, as it was encouraging to see families eager to prioritise the welfare of their children.

Listening to clients' stories and becoming someone they could trust was a profound privilege. While the realities of the legal workplace were demanding, the experience was deeply enriching and transformative. In conclusion, my time at ProBono.Org was both challenging and immensely rewarding. I thoroughly enjoyed undertaking consultations, engaging in legal work beyond the office, and gaining firsthand insight into the realities of legal practice.

STAFF NEWS

A New Chapter for the Durban Office

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Pearl Khumalo as Acting Regional Manager for the Durban office. Pearl is a legal professional with over 10 years of experience in the civil society sector, with a strong focus on human rights education, youth empowerment, and career guidance. She has previously served as a Staff Attorney and GBV Champion within the Durban office. We wish her every success as she steps into this role.



We are also pleased to welcome Ahmed Mayet who will be assisting the legal team. Ahmed has worked in the public interest litigation sector since being admitted as an attorney. He has empathy with clients from poor and vulnerable communities who cannot afford legal representation to defend their constitutional rights and to access justice. He joined the Johannesburg Legal Resources Centre where he was promoted to Director of that office. He then went on to head the Constitutional Litigation Unit where he was mentored by the late Advocate George Bizos . From time to time, Ahmed was called to the bench to act as Acting Judge in the Labour Court and also at the Johannesburg High Court. Welcome to the team Ahmed!



FAREWELLS



Durban

After seven years of dedicated service, Nicole Laljit, Regional Manager for the Durban office, concluded her tenure in January 2026. During her time at ProBono.Org, Nicole introduced meaningful operational

improvements and championed initiatives that have had a lasting, positive impact on the communities we serve. Her team has expressed deep appreciation for her exceptional leadership, particularly her commitment to empowering staff and fostering a positive, supportive workplace culture. We extend our sincere gratitude to Nicole and wish her every success in her future endeavours.



Johannesburg

At the end of December we also said farewell to Nonkululeko Sibambato, Senior Staff Attorney in the Joburg office. She contributed substantially to her legal portfolio that included labour law, family law, the GBV project and the Community Advice Office Support Programme, as well as overseeing the work of the staff attorneys and interns. We thank her for her dedication and leadership and wish her well in her future endeavours. Legal Consultant Lesego Vakalisa's contract ended in December and we thank her for her invaluable support to the staff attorneys in the Joburg office.



A warm welcome to our 2026 interns

Cape Town

Nhlakanipho Mbatha from Umlazi is an LLB graduate from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. His passion for human rights fuels his desire to advocate for marginalised communities and contribute to a more equitable society. When he is not in the law books, you can find him on the football pitch, chasing goals and balancing life.



Olethuxolo Mhlongo is a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) graduate from the University of the Western Cape. She has developed strong skills in statutory interpretation, case analysis, and legal research, complemented by practical experience in client consultations and drafting pleadings at the UWC Law Clinic. Olethuxolo is passionate about advocacy, dispute resolution, and advancing access to justice. She brings discipline, integrity, and a commitment to professional growth to her role at ProBono.Org.

Congratulations Corrine!



Corinne Baron, a legal intern at the ProBono.Org Cape Town office, graduated with her LLM (Criminal Justice) degree on 11 December 2025. Corinne completed her Masters degree at her alma mater, the University of the Western Cape. Her thesis explored whether the criminalisation of sex work in South Africa infringes the constitutional rights of black, female sex workers in South Africa. The completion of her LLM was driven by her passion for equality, the advancement of human rights and women's rights as well as the protection of women of colour in South Africa, may it be their bodies or their dignity.

STAFF NEWS

Johannesburg



L-R Fanelesibonge Mbuyazi, Delani Mthembu, Precious Masenya, and Onthatile Selebano
Photograph by Yolanda van der Stoep

Fanelesibonge Mbuyazi

"I hold an LLB from the University of Johannesburg and am currently pursuing an LLM in Corporate Law at the same institution. I am originally from Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal. Growing up in a rural part of Richards Bay, I witnessed the exploitation of vulnerable and elderly community members, an injustice that was deeply rooted in illiteracy. This experience sparked my initial interest in Public Interest Law, particularly in the areas of family law, succession, and customary law.

As an intern at ProBono.Org, I wish to gain comprehensive knowledge and practical experience in Public Interest Law, and to understand the real-world dynamics of legal practice, experience that will be invaluable as I work toward integrating this and corporate law into my career."

Delani Mthembu

"I am an LLB graduate and an LLM candidate in Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure at UNISA. My academic journey has led me to focus on cyber law, artificial intelligence regulation, and the law of evidence, areas that reflect both my curiosity about how technology reshapes society and my commitment to ensuring that law evolves to meet those challenges.

I am particularly interested in how emerging technologies disrupt traditional legal frameworks and raise new questions about fairness, accountability, and justice. These interests are shaped by my engagements with contemporary debates on digital colonialism and data sovereignty.

My long-term vision is to contribute to shaping legal frameworks and policy discourse around AI governance, and digital evidence. I value clarity, precision, and collaboration, and I thrive on opportunities to refine ideas, communicate them effectively, and translate theory into practice."

Onthatile Selebano

Onthatile is a dedicated and socially conscious aspiring legal practitioner. She holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and a Bachelor of Commerce in Law, and has completed the Legal Practice Programme at the LSSA School of Legal Practice (LEAD). She believes that access to justice is a fundamental pillar of a fair and equal society, particularly for marginalised and vulnerable communities. She has gained practical experience through volunteering at ProBono.Org and the Wits Law Clinic, where she assisted with client screenings, consultations, legal research, and case administration across labour, housing, family, and refugee law matters. Onthatile has a strong interest in access to justice, social rights advocacy, and public interest law, and is particularly passionate about legal research and writing.

"Being part of the ProBono.Org team allows me to work directly with communities at the front lines of access to justice, where legal assistance can have a real and meaningful impact in protecting the rights of those who need it most."

As we say farewell to our Joburg 2025 interns, we hope that they will have success and fulfilment in their legal careers and will build on the experience they gained at ProBono.Org.

We also extend congratulations to outgoing intern Jonathan Malatji, who earned his LLM in Labour Law while doing his internship this year.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE AND
FACEBOOK PAGE WHERE
YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT
OUR WORK

www.probono.org.za

JOHANNESBURG: 1st Floor West Wing
Women's Jail, 1 Kotze Street, Braamfontein 2017
telephone: 011 339 6080 **fax:** 086 512 2222

DURBAN: Unit 310, 3rd Floor, Cowey Park, 91-123
Problem Mkhize Rd, Morningside, Durban 4001
telephone; 031 301 6178 **fax:** 031 301 6941

CAPE TOWN: JDN House, 26A Shortmarket Street
Cape Town 8001
telephone: 087 470 0721 **fax:** 086 665 6740