

Celebrating Pro Bono Contributions

On 23 April 2026, ProBono.Org Durban hosted a combined Freedom Day and Attorney Appreciation Day in partnership with Deneys. The event celebrated Freedom Day in South Africa's constitutional democracy, marked 20 years of ProBono.Org's community service, and honoured the legal practitioners who support its work. The event was opened by Mr Sandile Khoza, Head of the Deneys Durban Office, who welcomed attendees and encouraged legal practitioners to adapt to the evolving legal landscape while ensuring the inclusion of the poor and vulnerable.

In this issue:

- Durban Pro Bono Awards
- Database of Constitutional Rights Cases
- PILnet Call for Proposals
- Legal Lifeline Partnership on Radio 919 FM
- Human Rights Festival Activities
- Convening Community Advice Offices
- Multi-stakeholder Marriage Seminar in Khayelitsha
- Access to Justice in South Africa 30 Years into Freedom
- Staff News - Durban intern appointment

Durban ProBono.Org Awards



Durban Pro Bono Awards



Judge Navi Pillay

Judge Navi Pillay delivered a compelling keynote address emphasising that pro bono work is a professional responsibility rather than an act of charity, while also reflecting on her experiences under Apartheid and her commitment to dignity and access to justice.

Professor Devenish concluded with an address titled “The Tale of the Two Speeches”, reflecting on pre-Apartheid constitutional jurisprudence and the negotiations that shaped South Africa’s Constitution.

The speakers collectively underscored the shared responsibility to uphold constitutional values of human dignity, equality, and justice.

ProBono.Org Durban expressed its gratitude to all legal practitioners, stakeholders, and partners, with special thanks to Nike Pillay Inc, Deney's, the KZN Provincial Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, Shalden’s Auto Centre, and Tetley for their generous support.

Category	Awardee
Excellence in Deceased Estates Assistance	Da Costa Inc Janine Naraiansamy & Associates - Iman Mia
Outstanding Support in Housing Matters	Meumann White Attorneys
Special Mention	Vinay Yetwaru
Outstanding Support in Consumer Law	Zama Luthuli Attorneys Inc.
Most Helpful with Wills	Rajaram Mvulane Attorneys
Champion for Family Law	Hughes-Madondo Attorneys
Champion for GBV Cases	Zamahlubi Xaba Attorneys
Excellence in Labour Law Assistance	Linda Mazibuko & Associates
Special Mention	Saiuri Seetal – Garlicke & Bousfield
Outstanding Community Stakeholder (3)	Durban South Community Advice Centre (DSCAC) Ashrafal Aid Ubuntu Foundation (Music in the Park)
Excellence in Media & Public Awareness	Sanele Msomi - Coleman Msomi Attorneys
Dedication to Attorney Training & Webinars	Jenny Finnigan - Shepstone & Wylie Attorneys
Most Pro Bono Hours Contributed	Meumann White Attorneys
Commitment to Special Help Desks Matters	Simrithi Sharma & Associates
Special Awards	Dr Winnie Martins - Centre for Community Justice and Development Professor McQuoid Mason Ilan Lax AB Moosa - Avalon Group of Companies

Congratulations

New database of constitutional rights cases – 1994 - 2026

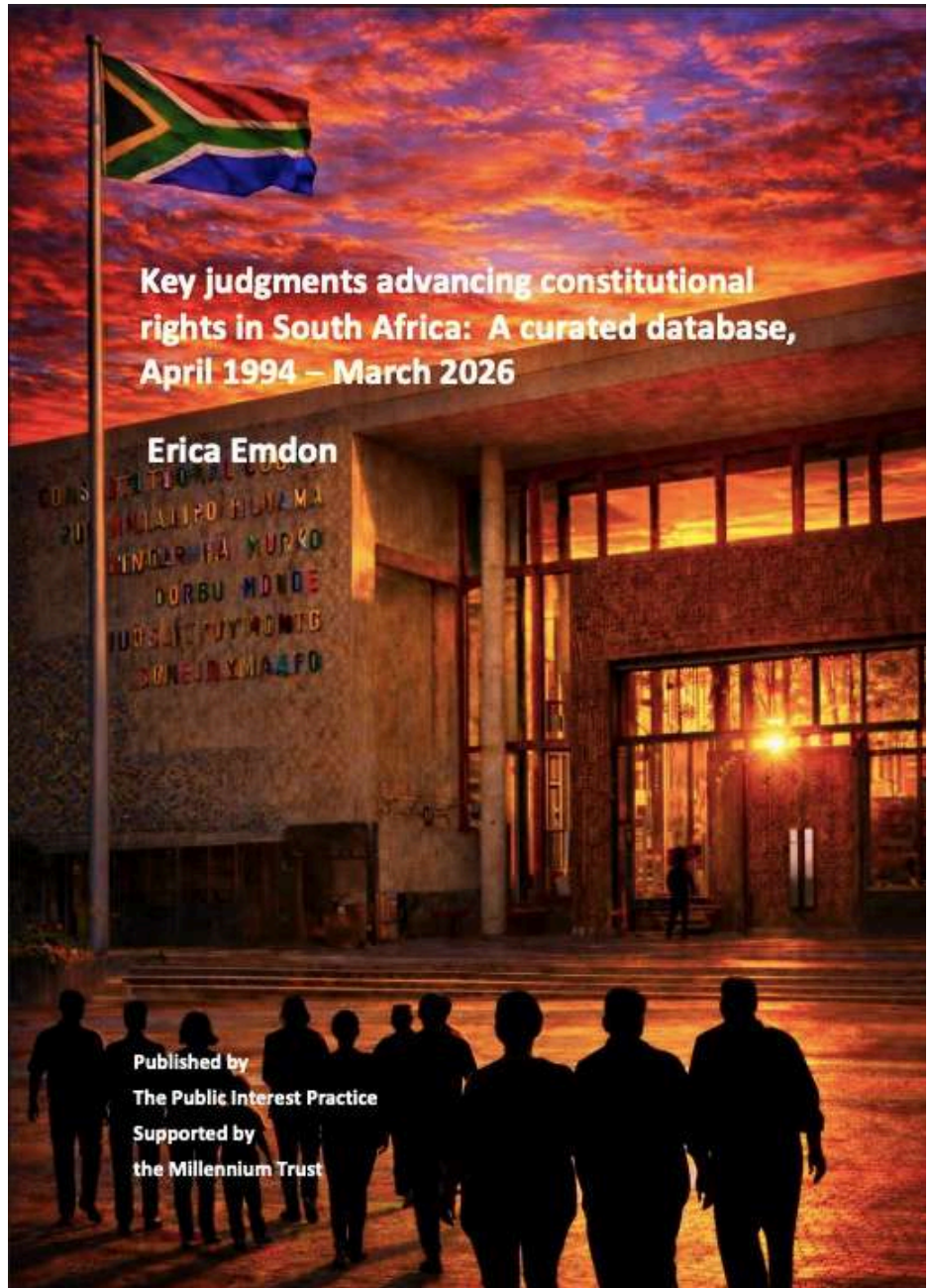
The Public Interest Practice has published a free online book, *Key Judgments Advancing Constitutional Rights in South Africa: A Curated Database, April 1994 – March 2026* by Erica Emdon. Available on the SAFLII website, this resource brings together more than 180 judgments that have shaped and strengthened constitutional rights in South Africa.

The book covers the full spectrum of socio-economic rights, alongside other fundamental freedoms such as the rights to protest and freedom of expression, and includes important developments in gender and migrant rights. Each case is presented through a concise summary, allowing readers to quickly grasp how the courts have expanded and deepened rights, particularly for people who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

Designed as a practical working tool, the publication is intended for paralegals, journalists, researchers, legal practitioners, and anyone interested in constitutional rights. The content is organised by right, enabling users to go directly to the sections most relevant to their needs and to draw selectively on the material.

The book is available under “Publications” on the SAFLII website:

<https://www.saflii.org/images/publications/key-judgments-constitutional-rights-south-africa-1994-2026.pdf>



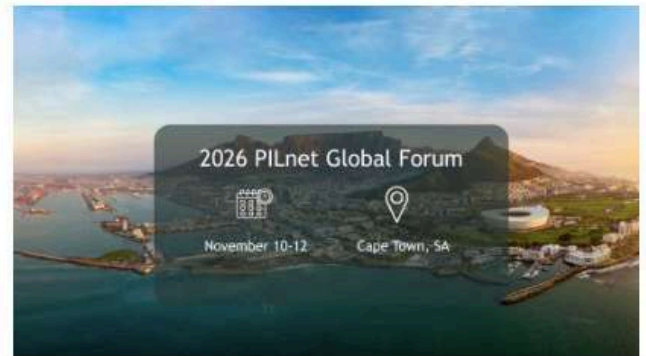
PILnet Call for Proposals

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 organisations, 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.



Call for Session Proposals

Organize a session for the 2026 PILnet Global Forum in Cape Town!

Submit your proposal by **Friday, May 8, 2026**

Legal Lifeline Partnership on Radio 919 FM



The Legal Lifeline is a practical and informative radio show and podcast on 919 FM, a community radio station based in Sandton, Johannesburg. Produced in partnership with ProBono.Org, the show is designed to help listeners understand their legal rights and navigate everyday challenges.

The show is hosted by Advocate Gushwell Brooks featuring expert insights and clear explanations on topics such as:

- Consumer rights and contracts.
- Family law and mediation.
- Workplace issues.
- Cyber law and medical practice law

Time: Every Thursday from 18:00 to 19:00.

Tune in to 919 FM in the Johannesburg/Sandton area, or listen live via the 919 FM official website. Missed episodes are available on iono.fm and the station's podcast page. Listeners can send questions or interact with the show via the station's WhatsApp number at 084 221 2919.

EVENTS

Human Rights Festival Activities - March 2026

ProBono.Org stall at Activism Row

By Precious Masenya, Communications Volunteer



“Remembering the Past. Engaging the Present. Shaping a Just Future.”

In honour of Human Rights Day, each year in March, Constitution Hill hosts the Human Rights Festival to reflect on South Africa’s past and present. This year from 26 - 28 March, ProBono.Org was part of the Festival on Activism Row to create a space of dialogue, creativity, and activism.

Activism Row brings together Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to provide opportunities to connect, learn, and get involved. Our stall provided an information space to encourage people, especially young people, to know about the work and impact of ProBono.Org and how they could get access to justice through our clearing house model.

The festival also included drumming, poetry, a kiddies section, film screenings, a book fair, panel discussions, a concert and We The People Walk.

Human Rights Day School’s Day Programme

By Precious Masenya, Communications Volunteer



On 26 March, as part of the Human Rights Festival, ProBono.Org’s OCAY (One Child A Year) programme hosted a schools day programme to inform and engage with learners from various schools about their human rights and access to justice.

ProBono.Org’s OCAY programme achieves most of its goals through partnerships and this creates a network that raises both reach and effectiveness. This year, we were honoured to have the Canadian High Commissioner, Mr James Christoff, to give a keynote address on children’s rights.

Furthermore, the workshop included information by the Department of Social Development, The Department of Basic Education, The National Heritage Council, Gender Based Violence and Femicides Response Fund, Equal Education Law Centre, Lawyers for Human Rights, House of Ditsie, Gauteng Provincial Legislature, and Spiritual Chords to enhance collaborative advocacy which helps improve policies, reduce bureaucratic delays, and improve monitoring of child care facilities.

As a result of such collaborations, children’s cases are resolved faster and more comprehensively. The children’s legal, social, and emotional needs are considered and systemic change becomes possible through policy advocacy backed by legal expertise.

PARTNERSHIPS

Convening Community Advice Offices

Gauteng

By Margaret Fish, Grants and Communications manager



Six CAOs from Gauteng, including Kagiso, Kempton Park/Tembisa, Orange Farm, Alberton, Mabopane and Dobsonville, attended a joint meeting on 28 March as part of the CAO Support Project.

They were introduced to Ahmed Mayet, who will coordinate the project going forward. Ahmed has extensive experience with the CAO sector, having spent many years at the Foundation for Human Rights.

Shafie Ameermia announced that the Minister of Justice has confirmed she received a letter from the Deputy Chief Justice requesting support for the CAO sector, and she will be convening a meeting of CAOs later this year.

He also shared that the CAOs will receive further training on the digital case management system developed for ProBono.Org. This will help them to record their cases and improve the efficiency of their operations.

The CAOs and the national paralegal movement play an important role in access to justice. CAOs were invited to make some suggestions as to how they would like to contribute to the marking of ProBono.Org's 20th anniversary later this year.

Bricks Moholo from the Orange Farm Human Rights Advice Centre proposed that the Gauteng CAOs collaborate to resolve some of the common challenges in their communities, such as family house and electricity issues.

KwaZulu-Natal

By Pearl Khumalo, Acting Regional Manager

ProBono.Org Durban, in collaboration with Deneys, engaged with community advice officers from Clermont, Inchanga, Ntuzuma, and Inanda. The community advice officers shared insights into the impactful work they are undertaking within their respective communities. The discussion focused on opportunities to expand pro bono legal services into these communities through strategic collaboration and partnership. The National Director, Shafie Ameermia, also shared information about the upcoming PILnet Global Conference scheduled for November 2026, highlighting it as an exciting opportunity for African issues to be placed at the forefront of the global access to justice dialogue. The session concluded with an introduction to our digital case management system, developed in partnership with the Empire Partner Foundation.



(L-R: Pearl Khumalo, Acting Regional Manager ProBono.Org Durban; Goodboy Gumede from Inchanga Community Resource Centre; Candice Pillay, Head of Social Impact, Deneys; Tex Dlodla from Masincedisane Community Advice Office; Advocate Shafie Ameermia, National Director, ProBono.Org; Mduzuzi Msomi from Clermont Community Resource Centre and Sabelo Mfeka from ACAORCE).

Multi-stakeholder Marriage Seminar in Khayelitsha

By Olethuxolo Mhlongo, Cape Town intern



ProBono.Org participated in the annual Khayelitsha Marriage Seminar on 19 March 2026. The Department of Local Government, Public Education Office, Parliament and City Health brought together key stakeholders such as ProBono.Org, FAMSA, VUKA (Towards Wellness), Better You Today, and the Department of Social Development, Home Affairs Department and Parliament's Public Education Office in order to educate community members about their rights related to life-long relationships, marriage and divorce.

Mr. Vuyani Xabendleni from the Public Education Office opened the seminar by emphasising the importance of public participation in legislative processes, noting that citizens should engage not only during elections but also in shaping laws. He related this to the amendments to the Marriage Bill, mentioning the efforts to simplify and modernise the country's marriage laws by bringing them all under one legislative umbrella. He noted that there is often confusion and

inequality presently, as different types of marriages are governed by separate laws. The new bill aims to fix that by creating one clear, inclusive law that treats all marriages equally, ensures all partners have the same rights, bans child marriages by proposing that the minimum age of marriage be set at the current South African age of majority, and formally recognises unions like Muslim marriages. It is notable that same-sex unions are affirmed as fully protected under the new bill.

Although customary marriages are fully recognised in terms of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998 ("the Act"), certain aspects still had to be clarified to community members. An active debate was held on customary marriages, in which it was emphasised that in instance of polygamous marriage, the husband must adhere to the Act. This requires applying to the High Court for approval of a written contract that regulates the matrimonial property system, ensuring the new marriage is valid and existing spouses are protected. Only customary marriages can be polygamous; civil marriages cannot.

Furthermore, one cannot legally enter into a customary marriage if one is already married in a civil marriage with someone else.

Ukuthwala was explicitly rejected as harmful, and members of the public were warned not to disguise it as a legitimate cultural practice. Ukuthwala is a traditional Southern African customary practice, often described as a "mock abduction" or "kidnapping" of a woman by a man to compel marriage negotiations. It becomes problematic when it is used for purposes of child marriages or when it is done without the consent of the woman.

Advocate Siphiso Ngobeni, who presented on behalf of ProBono.Org, also shared key points on various matrimonial property regimes. Importantly, she shared the importance of knowing the difference between marriage in community of property and out of community of property as a choice available to individuals before marriage, as both decisions have lasting financial and legal consequences.

Overall, the Marriage Seminar was a great success and ProBono.Org is privileged to have been able to participate in this collaboration.

Access to Justice in South Africa 30 Years into Freedom

By Senna Knecht, Pro Bono Volunteer



Freedom Day this year marks 32 years since South Africa's first democratic general elections on 27 April 1994. This momentous occasion fundamentally reshaped the country's constitutional order by enshrining human dignity, equality and freedom for all. While the values and human rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 ("the Constitution") remain a powerful framework, many individuals facing poverty, unemployment, gender-based violence, discrimination and systemic exclusion continue to experience barriers to accessing justice.

Freedom Day therefore underscores the ongoing importance of pro bono legal services in bridging the gap between rights on paper and the enforcement of human rights in the advancement of a more just and equitable society.

My name is Senna Knecht and I am a law student at the University of Applied Sciences in Leiden in the Netherlands. For the past five months I have volunteered at ProBono.Org's Cape Town office. Volunteering at ProBono.Org has been an exceptional experience in which I was able to develop a broad range of skills, including analytical skill, organisational competencies and soft skills. During my time as a volunteer, I contributed to the office by supporting the weekly help desks, drafting various legal documents and assisting in the development of case files through direct client communication. I also assisted attorneys with various aspects of casework. This experience was enriching as I was able to contribute to much-needed access to justice.

I have noticed time and time again that access to justice is not equally accessible for everyone in South Africa. Due to being unable to afford expensive legal fees, more than half of the South African population had to represent themselves in court last year – without solid legal knowledge, without a clear understanding of the legal system and ultimately without having their voices fairly represented by a lawyer. Additionally, only 12.9% of litigating individuals were able to afford a private attorney last year. Although these figures may come as a surprise to some, it should be noted that the number of people representing themselves over the past five years has steadily decreased by 7%. This decrease shows that even though progress has been made in increasing legal representation for litigants, the vast majority of litigants still face challenges with obtaining legal representation.

The Constitution is the highest law in South Africa. All legislation and court orders are to uphold the Constitution. A specific part of the Constitution, Chapter 2, addresses fundamental human rights. These rights are often referred to as the Bill of Rights. Access to justice, which falls under the Bill of Rights as per section 34, allows citizens, businesses and organisations to enforce their rights and find solutions to legal disputes.

Access to justice emphasises that everyone should be able to resolve disputes in a fair manner before an independent court. However, this human right is not easily realised in practice. What barriers do individuals face when trying to enforce their rights? Access to justice is limited due to several reasons, a few of which will be mentioned below. First, South Africa's state-funded Legal Aid for the criminal sector is much better developed than it is for the civil sector. Approximately 89% of new matters accepted by Legal Aid are criminal in nature and only 11% are civil in nature. People who cannot afford legal services suffer the consequences firsthand by receiving very limited civil pro bono legal support. Furthermore, the cost of legal services in South Africa is very high compared to other countries around the world. In 2013, former Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development John Jeffery noted this and conceded that legal costs were "astronomically high"

This is very concerning considering the high levels of poverty and unemployment in the country. For the cases that are heard in court, there are significant backlogs in the finalisation of court cases. As of April 2026, more than 300 court judgments are officially late. The North Gauteng High Court has the highest number of late judgments, with 55 judgments outstanding for longer than six months. Close in second place is the Johannesburg Labour Court with 51 late judgments, and the Durban Labour Court with 31.

Late judgments contribute to the poor accessibility of justice because, as the saying goes, justice delayed is justice denied. Because access to legal services is limited for so many, vulnerable people rely on organisations like ProBono.Org for assistance. ProBono.Org is a legal clearinghouse that makes legal advice accessible to everyone by providing free consultations, obtaining legal representation for clients who cannot afford to do so, assisting with mediations and educating vulnerable communities about their legal rights. This is all done with the support of the private legal sector who are to assist on a pro bono basis. ProBono.Org assisted over 6,000 clients in 2025, and the clientele base of the organisation continues to grow each year as the demand for legal services grows.

It warms my heart that ProBono.Org and various lawyers assisting on a pro bono basis contribute to furthering access to justice. In doing so the spirit of Freedom Day is fulfilled.



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**

STAFF NEWS

New intern joins the Durban office



Nolwandle Ngobese is a motivated law graduate who completed her LLB degree at Emeris. She has a strong work ethic and a genuine curiosity about how the law shapes everyday life. She is a thoughtful and reflective individual committed to continuous growth, approaching new opportunities with quiet determination, confidence in her abilities, and a willingness to learn from every experience. Her areas of interest include Wills and Estates, as well as Family Law.

When she is not exploring legal ideas, Nolwandle enjoys spending time at the gym, staying disciplined, focused, and energised for the next challenge.

Farewell Corinne!

Corinne Baron was a legal intern at the ProBono.Org Cape Town office. She graduated with her LLM (Criminal Justice) degree on 11 December 2025 at 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. We wish you all the best with your next adventure Corinne!



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