



Celebrating



of community service





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Message from the Chairperson

Meluleki Nzimande
Chairperson of the Board



20 Years of Advancing Justice, Dignity and Hope

This year, 2026, marks the 20th year of dedicated service to the poor and vulnerable communities and people to whom ProBono.Org has offered legal assistance. It is a testament to vision, courage, resilience and an unwavering belief that justice must be accessible to everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

As ProBono.Org celebrates its 20th anniversary, the Board of Directors does so with immense pride and profound gratitude. For two decades, ProBono.Org has stood at the intersection of law and social justice, working to ensure that those who are poor, vulnerable and marginalised are not excluded from the protection and promise of our Constitution.

This anniversary is, above all, a celebration of people. It is a celebration of the dedicated individuals who have given their knowledge, time and energy to this organisation; of the legal practitioners who have generously placed their expertise at the service of those who do not have means; of our donors and partners who have invested in our vision; and, most importantly, of the many thousands of individuals and communities whose lives have been touched by the work of ProBono.Org.

The value of the services provided by legal practitioners amounts to many millions of Rands per year. These achievements demonstrate the power of collective action and human solidarity.

As the Board, we have had the privilege and responsibility of providing governance, oversight and unwavering support to the organisation as it discharges its mandate. We have proudly stood behind the work of our management and staff and supported initiatives that advance access to justice and contribute meaningfully to the public good. We recognise that the impact of ProBono.Org extends far beyond the individual matters we assist. Every case resolved, every right protected and every barrier removed strengthens our society and gives practical meaning to the principle that justice belongs to all.

The past two decades have not been without challenges. The social justice sector continues to operate in an environment of significant financial and institutional pressures. Yet ProBono.Org has demonstrated that difficult circumstances need not diminish ambition. Instead, we can proudly state that for us they engendered resilience, innovation and strategic thinking. With the support of the Board, management, staff and partners, the organisation has grown its impact while remaining firmly anchored in its purpose.

The 20th anniversary year carries an added significance as ProBono.Org prepares to co-host the PILnet Global Forum in Cape Town, South Africa, marking the first time on African soil.

We are particularly proud of the organisation's growing strategic partnerships, its embrace of digital transformation, its public interest work and its continued contribution to the development of people-centred justice. These achievements affirm that ProBono.Org is not merely responding to the needs of today; it is helping to shape the future of access to justice.

This is a remarkable achievement and a powerful reflection of the organisation's growing contribution to the international pro bono and public interest law community. The 20th anniversary celebration also coincides with the 30th anniversary of the South African Constitution whose promise of justice to all ProBono.Org has worked tirelessly to fulfil.

As we look back with gratitude, we must also look forward with determination. Twenty years of service is not the conclusion of our journey; it is a foundation upon which the next chapter must be built. The Board will spare no effort in ensuring that ProBono.Org grows and strengthens its Clearing House model, deepens partnerships, embraces innovation and expands its reach and impact.

We extend our deepest appreciation to every person and institution that has journeyed with ProBono.Org this far and that continue to do so. We recognise past and present Board members, staff, interns, legal practitioners, donors, community organisations, partners and supporters. Your collective contribution has helped transform an idea into an institution that continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people and communities.

Twenty years ago, ProBono.Org began with a vision. Today, many lives have changed for the better because that vision was pursued with courage and conviction. We continue our work with a renewed sense of purpose.

*Happy 20th Anniversary
Meluleki Nzimande
Chairperson of the Board of Directors*

Message from th

Shafie Ameermia
National Director



Twenty years ago, ProBono.Org began with a bold conviction: justice should never be a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. It should be accessible, dignified and within reach of every person, especially those who are poor, marginalised and vulnerable. As we mark our twentieth anniversary in October 2026, we celebrate two decades of purpose and impact, with deep gratitude to those who have carried this vision forward, pride in the lives and communities we have touched, and renewed determination to make access to justice a reality for many more in the years ahead.

Our anniversary invites us to reflect on the continuing responsibility to give practical meaning to the rights enshrined in our Constitution. For many people in South Africa, poverty, inequality and unemployment continue to place legal assistance beyond their reach. Behind every matter brought to our offices is a person or family seeking to protect their rights, secure their future and live in dignity.

This responsibility has become more demanding as the funding crisis across the social justice sector places considerable pressure on organisations serving vulnerable and poor communities. ProBono.Org has also felt these pressures. They have required us to reassess how we work, strengthen our institutional foundations and make careful decisions about how best to sustain our services.

When I joined ProBono.Org in 2023, it was clear that responding to these challenges would require a deliberate programme of action. Through our Access to Justice Vision 2030 strategic plan, we set about strengthening our operations, improving our visibility and building strategic partnerships for greater impact. With the support of our Board, management and staff, this work has helped turn the organisation around and placed us on a firmer footing. While financial sustainability remains an ongoing priority, we approach the future with greater clarity, resilience and purpose.

e National Director

In 2025, with a budget of R12 Million, ProBono.Org assisted 7,249 clients nationally, supported by 733 legal practitioners who generously contributed 19,766 hours of pro bono work, valued at R59 Million. These contributions reflect the commitment of the organised legal profession to ensuring that the promise of our Constitution reaches those who need its protection most.

Our commitment to strategic collaboration is reflected in the public interest matters we have supported over recent years. These include Caster Semenya's pursuit of justice before the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, working with Mr Greg Nott and Norton Rose Fulbright, the Office of the Presidency and the Commission for Gender Equality; and support for victims of the Johannesburg Usindiso building fire through Ms. Candice Pillay's work at the Khampepe Commission of Inquiry. Through Ms. Fatima Laher of Bowmans Inc., we also brought an amicus application before the Constitutional Court in the matter concerning the binding nature of the South African Human Rights Commission's directives. These interventions demonstrate the importance of bringing legal expertise and institutional partnerships together to advance the constitutional rights of the poor, indigent, vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Equally significant are the victories that change the course of individual lives. Our Children's Rights project, led by Adv. Elsabe Steenhuisen, secured a favourable High Court order, including costs, in a long-running matter against the Minister of Home Affairs concerning the right to citizenship. Ms. Daphne Makombe's intervention in 2024 also enabled a learner without a birth certificate to register for matric examinations after initially being denied access to education. These achievements remind us that sustained advocacy can restore dignity, remove barriers and open opportunities for those whose rights might otherwise remain unrealised.

Our continued digital transformation is an important part of this progress. Through our partnership with the Empire Partner Foundation, our customised digital case management system is strengthening the way we record, manage and report on our work. Better data collection enables us to understand the needs of our clients, support our staff and demonstrate the impact of the resources entrusted to us.

Message from the National Director

We have also advanced our commitment to collaboration through memoranda of understanding with SADC Law and the South African Human Rights Commission. These relationships provide an important foundation for joint efforts to advance access to justice and human rights. Our discussions with the Pan-African Parliament offer further opportunities to explore how ProBono.Org can contribute to a broader continental dialogue on justice and the needs of vulnerable communities. We work with stakeholders, civil society and community leaders actively involved in human rights protection, building strategic partnerships that drive meaningful impact.

As this report is published, we are preparing to welcome the international pro bono community to Cape Town for the PILnet Global Forum in November 2026, the first time the Forum will be held on African soil. This milestone was achieved through the tireless efforts of our team, in collaboration with partners across East and West Africa. In 2025, we submitted a successful bid to PILnet to co-host the Forum, which was unanimously approved by the PILnet Board of Directors.

At the 2025 PILnet Global Forum in Rome, we presented high-impact sessions on *People-Centred Justice Through Public Interest Law and Pro Bono Developments in Africa: Challenges, Impact and Innovation*. These were among the Forum's most attended sessions, reflecting strong global interest in African-led innovation, and our contributions received positive recognition from PILnet's executive leadership.

Co-hosting the Forum is a significant milestone in our twentieth anniversary year. It provides an opportunity to showcase African expertise and experience, learn from colleagues globally, and build partnerships that strengthen access to justice beyond the Forum itself, *while placing ProBono.Org firmly on the international map.*

Our anniversary is both a moment of celebration and a renewed commitment to the future. We will continue to strengthen our Clearing House model, deepen partnerships and embrace practical innovations that expand access to quality, dignified legal assistance and make access to justice a reality for all.

To our Board of Directors, staff, interns, donors, legal practitioners, community advice offices and partners, thank you for your unwavering commitment, generosity and trust. Your contribution has been central to making ProBono.Org's work possible. Twenty years of service has demonstrated the power of collective commitment to advancing justice. A special thank you to our previous Board members and all the staff members whose resilience has shaped ProBono.Org to be the social justice institution it has become. As we look to the future, we do so with gratitude, optimism and determination, committed to strengthening ProBono.Org's impact and making access to justice a reality for many more people.

Adv. Mohamed Shafie Ameermia
Email: shafie@probono.org.za
Phone: +27 78 458 4211



Milestones

2006

- ProBono.Org registered. Founder and National Director – Odette Geldenhuys
- Chairperson: Claire Tucker, Bowman Gilfillan
- One main funder: The Atlantic Philanthropies. 4 staff members

2007

- ProBono Law, fortnightly radio programme on Radio Today, hosted by Patrick Bracher of Deneys Reitz for the next 11 years!

2009

- Move from Schreiner Chambers to Constitution Hill
- Income: R2.7 million from 14 donors
- 6 staff members

2010

- Granting of law clinic status by the Law Societies of the Northern Provinces
- Seminars provided for legal practitioners and workshops for communities
- Launch of the Community Advice Office Support Project

2011

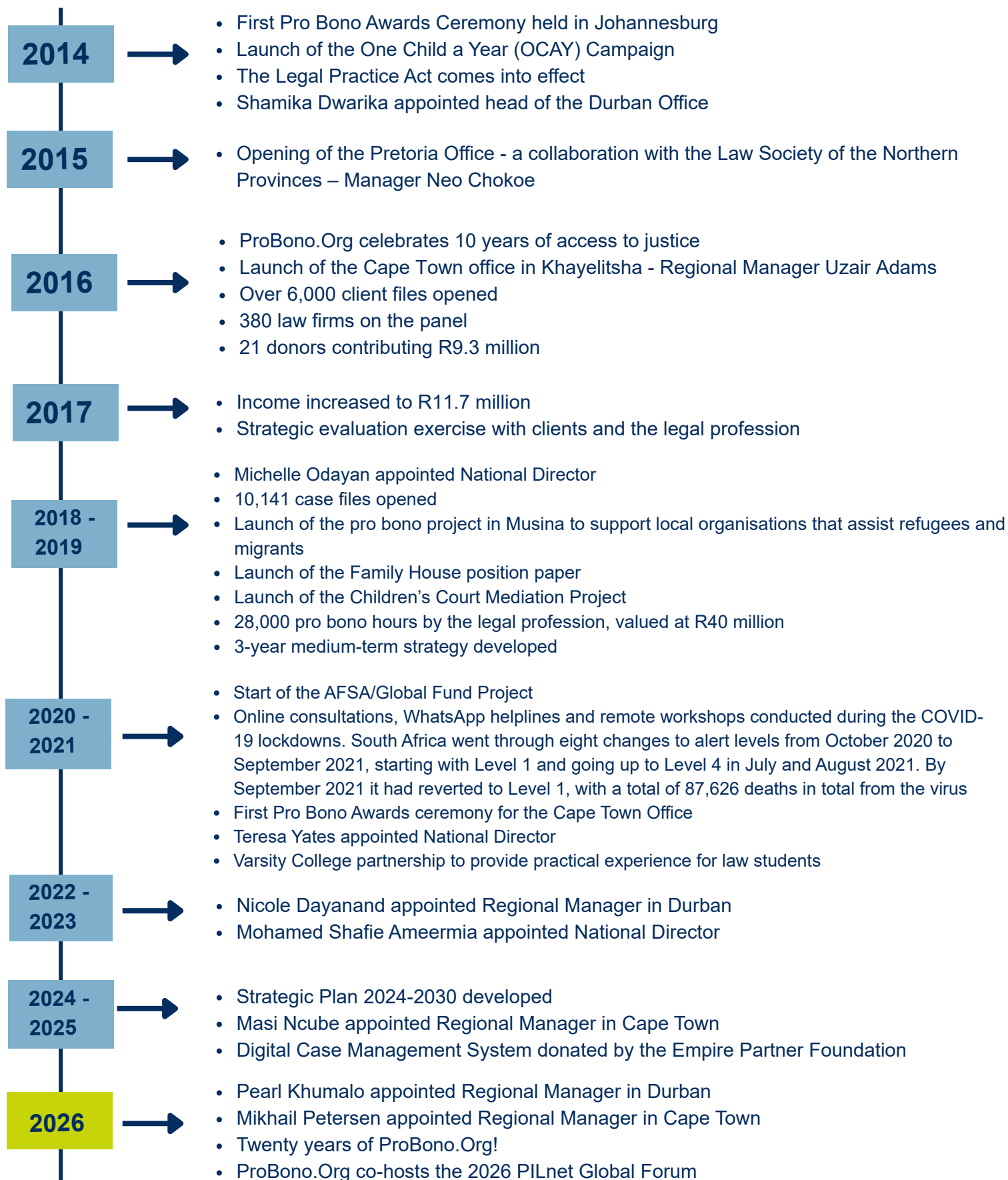
- Opening of the Durban Office – Odette Geldenhuys as Director. 30 law firms signed up
- Simon Delaney appointed National Director
- Help desks opened at the Johannesburg High Court, Johannesburg Labour Court
- Winner of the 2011 Dr Ivan May Memorial Award for Drivers of Change for forwarding the rights of the poor and transforming society

2012

- Chairperson – Andy Bester, Johannesburg Bar Council
- Income R5,3 million
- Signature projects with law firms:
 - Eversheds Police Brutality Legal Clinic
 - Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr Corporate Governance Clinic for NGOs and CBOs
 - Bell Dewar Gender Help Desk
 - Norton Rose Wills Project
 - SMME clinic with Bowmans

2013

- Michelle Posemann takes over from Odette Geldenhuys as head of the Durban Office
- Erica Emdon appointed as National Director
- Civil Society Support Programme launched
- Launch of the Internship Programme



DIRECTORS

We are grateful to the members of the Board who have provided strategic direction to ProBono.Org over the years

2006 - 2012

- **Claire Tucker**
- **Masi Mathai**
- **Eric van den Berg**
- **Rakhee Bhoora**
- **Bongiwe Mpitso**
- **Timothy Fletcher**
- **Ivan May**
- **Liesl Williams**
- **Janet Braun**
- **Lindie Saunderson**
- **Simon Delaney**
- **Andy Bester**
- **Janet Love**
- **Odette Geldenhuys**
- **Moray Hathorn**
- **Harold Jacobs**
- **Erica Emdon**
- **Candice Pillay**
- **Zeenat Dasoo**
- **Sandra Gordon**
- **Reghana Tulk**
- **Christine Jesseman**



2013 - 2020

- Seleka Morwe
- Ayanda Ngubo
- Ilan Lax
- Jacqueline Cassette
- Michele Odayan
- Mohamed Randera
- Teresa Yates
- Sushila Dhever
- Khalik Mayet
- Wendel Bloem
- Meluleki Nzimande
- Sayi Nindi

2021 - 2026

- Candice Pillay (second term)
- Odette Geldenhuys (second term)
- Shafie Ameeremia
- Anthony Gotz
- Chantelle Gladwin-Wood
- Gerhard Cilliers
- Joanna Govender
- Nolufefe Memeza
- Sibongiseni Dlamini-Mntambo
- Ilan Lax (second term)
- Mohamed Randera (second term)
- Meluleki Nzimande (second term)
- Sayi Nindi (second term)

Partner message

Fatima Laher, Bowmans



I am the head of pro bono at Bowmans, and I manage and coordinate our firm's pro bono work across all our offices on the continent.

Our journey with ProBono.Org began 20 years ago with the inception of ProBono.Org.

Our interaction with them is market faceted but the most important work we do is servicing a number of their pro bono legal clinics.

It has given us a great opportunity to render pro bono services to deserving clients.

I think it is fair to say that ProBono.Org is one the most important access to justice organisations and as such it deserves our full and unwavering support. It is up to us to ensure as well that they grow from strength to strength.

On behalf of all of us at Bowmans, we have two messages today: First is to say thank you and express our immense gratitude to ProBono.Org and all its very dedicated staff with whom we have worked very closely over the past 20 years.

And then to raise the glass and say salute - here's to another great 20 years and we hope that ProBono.Org will grow and achieve even greater heights.

I end off with the hope as Bowmans that we will be able to walk these 20 years with you.

Brent Botha

I am Brent Botha, CEO of Deneys (formerly Norton Rose Fulbright SA)

I am pleased to join ProBono.Org in celebrating your 20th anniversary in providing access to justice by providing legal services to the most vulnerable in South Africa.

Milestones are important because they provide an opportunity to consider where you started, how you have journeyed over the years, an opportunity to reflect on the lessons learnt, the challenges you have endured and the victories that you've won.

Milestones also help to carve a path into the future while firmly creating stronger foundations in the present for future growth. We will soon transition to independence, as Deneys we are forging into a future that is exciting, that is robust, challenging and yet rewarding. But we do not go alone.

Along with our clients, our partners, our staff, we journey with you ProBono.Org into the next 20 years and beyond.

Our commitment to human rights and access to justice is deep and woven into the fabric of our firm. We appreciate that in the current

economic climate, the ability to flourish for organisations such as yourself is limited. Your strength has grown in moments we may have believed that you

can't go on, but you kept going on. This resilience is your heartbeat. We therefore celebrate you and the great strides that you've made to ensure your own sustainability in the legal sector and we wish you well.



Greg Nott, Deneys

To my friend Shafie, congratulations on your organisation's 20th anniversary.

ProBono.Org does so much for the marginalised, for the poor, for those who don't get access to justice. You have led a team of unique individuals in a unique country.

My hats off to you, to the organisation and 20 years of celebrations.

All the very best.



Jacquie Cassette, Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr

Hello to everybody from ProBono.Org.

Wishing you all many congratulations on your 20th year anniversary.

This a real milestone for an organisation that is really making a significant and meaningful impact.

Wishing you many many years of success ahead and may you grow from strength to strength.



Sushila Dhever, Fasken

Congratulations to ProBono.Org on celebrating your 20-year anniversary.

From being a board member to an attorney staffing your very many clinics, I can only congratulate you on your wonderful achievement on making access to justice a reality for many South Africans.

I'd like to wish you continued strength and may you continue flourishing with the great work that you do.



Partner messages

Nicolette Joubert, Debra Gouws Attorneys Inc., Cape Town

DGA Attorneys has had the privilege of assisting ProBono.Org with matters for several years and it is an honour to be part of this milestone celebration.

The work ProBono.Org does is nothing short of amazing. Connecting people who could never otherwise afford legal representation with attorneys who are willing and able to assist is a service that has such a profound impact on people's lives. Our work in assisting clients via ProBono.Org has centred largely on property-related matters, and there is a particular kind of fulfilment that comes from handing a title deed to someone who has waited years for resolution to their matter. Beyond individual matters, we've valued the opportunity to assist with consultations at the pro-bono desk at the Cape Town Deeds Office, where we get to meet people at the very start of that journey and help demystify a process that can otherwise feel completely overwhelming and inaccessible.

Congratulations to ProBono.Org on 20 years of extraordinary work.



Ilan Lax , former Board member

ProBono.Org reflects a vibrant partnership between the staff, the board, the funders, the legal practitioners, community advice offices, and even government. This reflects an integrated and holistic approach to problem solving in the access to justice ecosystem. It is an effective solution that can be built upon and that can take the organisation forward into the future.

I wish you all the success in the future and assure you of my continued support and involvement going forward.

Patrick Bracher, Webber Wentzel

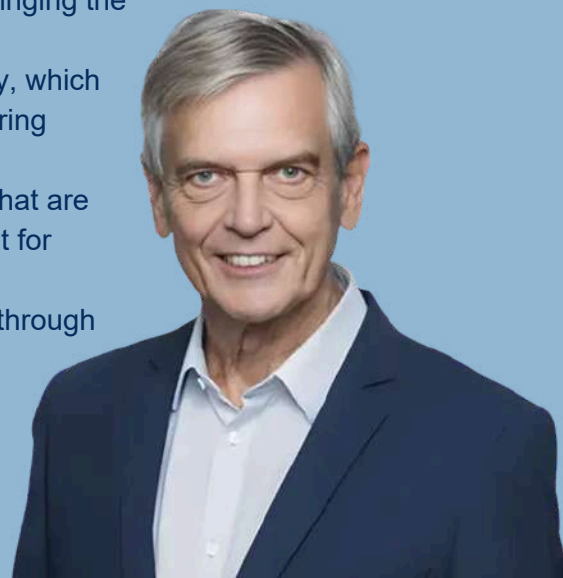
It is my sincere pleasure to congratulate ProBono.Org for 20 years of bringing the Bill of Rights to the people.

They sponsored the constitutional law radio programme on Radio Today, which I hosted for eleven years. It was an amazing achievement of theirs to bring reality to words, but they do so much more than that.

The courts have said many times that without people getting the rights that are written in the Bill, nothing follows. And ProBono.Org has been doing that for 20 years, giving people real access to justice, not just words.

I congratulate you and I wish you well for the next 20 years that you go through doing the same thing.

Well done ProBono.Org



Erica Emdon, former National Director

I would like to say a few words to you on the occasion of ProBono.Org's 20th anniversary.

I worked there from 2006 to 2017. When I started, we were in a tiny little office on the 13th floor (or something like that) of Schreiner Chambers, we had a small little boardroom and a staff of four.

And when I left in 2017, we'd moved to Constitution Hill in the Women's Jail and we had those beautiful offices, and a staff of 30. When we started, we had one major donor, the Atlantic Philanthropies, but when I left we had over 20.

So, the organisation grew and flourished, and we had an enormous impact (I think) on the legal profession, which ProBono.Org still does.



What has been amazing is that ProBono.Org has sustained itself through thick and thin. It has grown, it's developed, it's got new staff, it's got a wonderful new director, Shafie, and it continues to be a name in the industry, and of course in the human rights sector.

I watched it grow, I saw our staff grow, I saw us open offices in Durban and in Cape Town. I worked with many different wonderful people, I've met young people who'd come through universities as interns. I've met experienced attorneys, private legal profession advocates and attorneys in their different capacities.

It was an enriching and wonderful experience, but more than anything I feel very proud that ProBono.Org is still very much there in the world of the legal fraternity, it has not shown signs of diminishing its role or its importance. So, congratulations to everyone who works at ProBono.Org, to all the people who support ProBono.Org, to all the donors, to all the attorneys, to the advocates, to the public interest law organisations. You all are part of the ProBono family and I congratulate you all.



KwaZulu Natal Deaf Association (KZNDA)

KZNDA is privileged to have a very positive partnership with ProBono.Org for over a decade. It has been a very rewarding experience to engage with the ProBono.Org team and we acknowledge their valuable services in ensuring that the Deaf community are provided with legal advice and access to the justice system. The organisation has also conducted life skills sessions with Deaf learners and in so doing, has capacitated them with relevant information on issues impacting their day-to-day lives. The team holds regular legal clinics where Deaf people can consult with lawyers partnering with ProBono.Org and get their wills drafted free of charge. In this way, ProBono.Org has been an invaluable support structure for the Deaf community.

We wish ProBono.Org many more successful years of providing access to justice for the most vulnerable communities and look forward to continuing our partnership.



Iman Mia, Iman Mia and Company

My journey with ProBono.Org began at a transitional point in my life. While working on a short-term contract in Cape Town and still finding my niche within the law, I met Masi Ncube, then Regional Manager of the Cape Town office. He connected me with the KZN office, and in July 2024, I joined the Estates Help Desk, committing my time alongside my work.

The Estates Help Desk has been particularly grounding, bringing the law back to its most fundamental purpose - finding practical solutions to real problems. It has also introduced me to a community of like-minded people who share that sense of purpose.

In 2025, I was honoured with a Pro Bono Award for my work at the Estates Help Desk, and that recognition has since come full circle in unexpected ways. This year, an advocate whom I have never met referred a matter to my firm via email and when I asked how he found my details, he said that he remembered me from the awards - it was such a lovely and unexpected moment.

ProBono.Org has given me the opportunity to practise law in a way that feels true to who I am, and I am grateful to continue being part of its journey.



Candice Pillay, Deneys

Best wishes to ProBono.Org for reaching this incredible milestone. The journey towards justice has never been an easy one but you stayed the course and now stand as a beacon of hope to all who are vulnerable and disenfranchised when it comes to legal services and access to justice. This is an incredible legacy! Deneys remains a proud strategic implementation partner to ProBono.Org and collaborates in bringing legal services to the poorest communities in South Africa.

Client Cas

IMPACT CASE

South African Human Rights Commission v Agro Data CC and Another CCT 264/24 - [2026] ZACC 16

On 22 April 2026, the Constitutional Court ruled that the SA Human Rights Commission (HRC) must approach a competent court to enforce its findings, settling a long-running legal question about the extent of the commission's powers. The judgment clarified that HRC directives are recommendations, not binding orders, and that litigation is the proper mechanism when respondents refuse to comply.

In this matter, Bowmans acted for ProBono.Org on a pro bono basis as amicus curiae, representing the interest of individuals and organisations who need access to justice

Facts of the matter

The case stems from a dispute related to access to water. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) received a complaint made by farm dwellers who were suddenly deprived access to the borehole water that they previously had access to over a prolonged period prior to the sale of the farm to new owners (i.e., Agro Data CC). The borehole was their primary source of water for personal use purposes / purposes other than their subsistence farming, and unilaterally restricting their access infringed on their constitutional right of access to water. The farm dwellers were informed that they would have to rely on water from a river on the farm for access to water, alternatively, they would be charged an (arbitrary) amount for use of the borehole water, which they could not afford. The farm dwellers' access to water from the river was subsequently encumbered by the new owners which indirectly rendered their use and consumption untenable. The farm dwellers had no alternate sources of water and the farm did not have municipal infrastructure capable of delivering a reliable source of potable water to the dwellers.

The SAHRC investigated the complaint and, in its final investigative report, directed the new farm owners to restore water access and engage with the affected community of farm dwellers. The farm owners ignored these directives, leading the SAHRC to seek a declaratory order from the High Court that its directives were binding. The High Court declined to declare the SAHRC's directives as binding. Dissatisfied with this outcome, the SAHRC appealed the matter to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA). While the SCA acknowledged SAHRC's pivotal role in our democracy and emphasised that its recommendations should be given serious consideration, it ultimately held that SAHRC directives are not binding unless confirmed by a court of law or competent tribunal, alternatively through mediation or negotiations.

Constitutional Court Judgement

Acting Justice Caroline Nicholls, writing for the Constitutional Court, said the question of the legal status of the SAHRC's directives was of "national importance" and had significant implications. She said that while all Chapter 9 institutions had a shared objective of checking government power and contributing to the transformative project, the SAHRC had a distinctly broad mandate, covering all human rights in both the public and private domain. It was created for the purpose of giving life to a culture of human rights through monitoring, education, research, investigation and assistance in security redress. These functions are suggestive of a body designed to facilitate, engage and influence, rather than control and compel. In this way it exerts co-operative control rather than coercive control.

Justice Nicholls penning the judgement stated further, "It must be stressed that recognising the absence of binding remedial powers does not diminish the constitutional importance of the SAHRC or render its work ineffectual. It is far from toothless. Properly understood, its strength lies precisely in its capacity to act in ways that courts cannot. ***It remains a potent and indispensable guardian of human rights within our constitutional scheme.***"

The Court's confirmation that facilitating engagement is within the SAHRC's legitimate mandate means that a failure to engage in good faith remains a relevant consideration both in subsequent litigation and in any assessment of reasonable conduct. A failure to engage constructively may harden the evidential record and inform both the SAHRC's decision to fund or bring litigation and any court's assessment of a party's conduct. Parties who are the subject of SAHRC complaints should accordingly treat the process with the seriousness it warrants, engage substantively and obtain appropriate legal advice at the earliest opportunity.

Whilst this means that vulnerable, underprivileged and marginalised communities will experience greater difficulties in accessing justice, it was important for us to have represented their interest. This was a significant constitutional matter which had to be ventilated and provided important insight on the role of the SAHRC in our constitutional democracy.

The core Bowmans team consisted of Bongumusa Sibiyi, Simon Ruff, Akisha Maraj, and Tameez Jhetam. Our counsel team consisted of Bowmans alumnus, Jason Brickhill, and Mfundo Salukazana.

Client Cas

Case Study 1 Higher Duty of Care when acting Pro Bono

Pro bono legal services are aimed at making justice more accessible to the most impoverished members of our society. When providing legal services to pro bono clients, it is important for legal practitioners to exercise a higher duty of care. In exercising such a higher duty of care, legal practitioners may be required to look for solutions to problems that are not necessarily the problems identified by the pro bono client.

On or about April 2018, Fasken was approached for legal assistance by a mother of a child born with a permanent disability known as chronic subdural hematoma, which rendered him severely disabled and in need of special health care. The mother requested Fasken to assist with an application for the child's maintenance against his father, and an application for the child's birth certificate.

A maintenance order was accordingly obtained against the father of the child. Notwithstanding various obstacles encountered in respect of the registration of the child's birth, the child was eventually issued with a South African birth certificate in March 2022.

In the process of assisting this client, Fasken identified a number of further issues that the client required assistance with, including the following:

- The mother, who is a citizen of Lesotho, required assistance with regularising her status in South Africa;
- As a result of the child's severe disability, he required assistance with applying for a care-dependency grant from the South African Social Security Agency ("SASSA");
- The mother needed further assistance with the enforcement of the maintenance order against the father pursuant to numerous instances of non-compliance

Having identified the abovementioned issues, Fasken assisted the client with preparing and lodging an application for:

- South African permanent residence in terms of the Immigration Act 13 of 2002;
- the child's care dependency grant with the SASSA; and
- the enforcement of the maintenance order against the father's employer, and subsequently his pension fund.

With the assistance from Fasken, the mother is now a permanent resident of South Africa and the child is receiving a care dependency grant. Fasken has also obtained a maintenance enforcement order to attach the father's pension benefits to satisfy his maintenance obligations.

In many instances, pro bono clients do not have the necessary knowledge to properly identify all the legal issues they face and remedies they need. It is therefore important for the legal representatives to exercise a higher duty of care when advising these clients. Legal representatives should strive to provide sustainable solutions for clients and properly interrogate instructions.

Fasken's journey with this client did not end there. The firm further raised funds to purchase a wheelchair for her child, to empower the child with mobility and the ability to undertake certain tasks independently. Lastly, Fasken assisted with ensuring that the child was enrolled in a school for children with special needs.

Client Case

Case study 2

The right to inheritance in same-sex partnerships (van den Anker)

ProBono.Org was approached by P, an adult male. P initially requested our office to provide him with an attorney who could assist with instituting legal action against the family of his deceased partner and to assist him in lodging a claim as the sole heir of his deceased partner's estate. P arrived in South Africa in 1993 and was employed within the country. P is still receiving a pension from his country of origin, the Netherlands, which exceeds our means test and it was therefore agreed that ProBono.Org would assist him with the matter as it is one of public interest and that it would be referred to an advocate for an opinion to guide him on his legal rights in this instance.

The background to the case is that whilst P was working in South Africa he met and fell in love with B. They moved in together in 1996 and wanted to formalise their relationship in 2002. They sought the assistance of an attorney and they deposed to a statutory affidavit required for life partners in terms of the Regulations Relating to the Exemption of Life Partners from the Provisions of Section 23 of the Aliens Control Act, 1991 (GN 6794 (No. 21130) dated 25 April 2000). In 2004 they deposed to the second affidavit under the same provision.

They were thus under the impression that they had concluded a formal domestic partnership agreement.

In 2003 the parties bought and moved into an immovable property and a bond was registered in both their names. During the existence of their partnership P was the one responsible for the repayment of the bond and payment of other bills in the common home. They were faced with financial problems in 2006 and P acquired a second bond over their property. B passed away intestate in May 2010 after a short illness. At that stage B's brother and sister took charge of his affairs. P was given very little say in the funeral arrangements but in the end the family agreed that the funeral could take place at the home that the deceased shared with P. He received 50% of the deceased's pension fund as he was the nominated beneficiary.

On 31 May 2010, P tried to report his partner's death at the office of the Master of the High Court in Johannesburg. However, he was told that he does not qualify to report the death as he is not the surviving spouse of the deceased and, further, that he does not qualify to inherit from the intestate estate.

The deceased's family appointed their attorney as the executor of B's estate. P filed a claim to the said property with the executor, which was vigorously opposed. The executor, together with the deceased's family, continued to wind up the estate to the total exclusion of P and disregarded the Life Partnership Agreement that he and B had entered into.

We then referred the matter to counsel to assist with an opinion. Advocate Clifford McKelvey took on the matter. Counsel concluded that P's application for exemption from Section 23 of the Aliens Control Act may constitute proof of his partnership with B but not of the solemnisation of his life partnership.

Counsel referred to the earlier judgment of *Gory v Kolver* N.O. 2007 (4) SA 97 (CC) and the recent Constitutional Court judgment of *Laubscher N.O. v Duplan and Another* [2016] ZACC 44 handed down on 30 November 2016.

In the judgment of *Gory v Kolver* N.O., the constitutional validity of section 1(1) of the Intestate Succession Act 81 of 1987 ("the Act") was challenged to the extent that it confers rights of intestate succession on heterosexual spouses but not on permanent same-sex life partners.

The Court held that section 1(1) of the Act was unconstitutional. They remedied the injustice by reading section 1(1) of the Act as though the following words appear after the word "spouse" wherever it appears in the section: "or partner in a permanent same-sex life partnership in which the partners have undertaken reciprocal duties of support".

After the *Gory* judgment, the government seemingly resolved the injustice highlighted in *Gory* by promulgating the Civil Union Act on 29 November 2006. Thus, same sex partners could now solemnise their partnership in terms of the Civil Union Act and be afforded the same legal protection as heterosexual couples. But this did not completely resolve the inheritance issue, as in the case of *Duplan*. The dispute was whether *Duplan* was entitled to inherit the intestate estate of the deceased in circumstances where there was never a formal solemnisation or registration of their partnership. Based on the *Duplan* case, counsel concluded that P is the sole heir to the deceased estate.

With regards to the property, counsel concluded that the property was registered in both the names of the deceased and P, making them co-owners of the property with an undivided equal share in the property and are considered joint legal owners of the property. As joint legal owners of the property they are also liable for the expenses associated with the maintenance of the property and the utility accounts and taxes. The deceased's share of the property therefore falls into his estate.

Counsel further concluded that P is the sole heir of B's estate and the entire property should devolve to him and, further, that there is no reason why P should not be appointed as the executor of B's estate. He is, in law, the sole intestate heir to the estate and the deceased's family has no claim to the estate or any part thereof. P was advised to appoint a private attorney and to consult with the Master of the High Court to have the current executor removed and to have himself appointed as executor, alternatively, and at the very least, to have himself appointed as a co-executor of the estate.

Client Case

Case Study 3

Durban family/child case

3

In 2017 we had a matter where the father of two children applied for primary residence. ProBono.Org appointed an attorney to oppose the matter on behalf of the mother and referred same to the family advocate for an enquiry. In the interim our client had taken the father to the maintenance court where he stated that he was unemployed and had spent his package from his previous employer. The attorney looked at the father's bank statements and noticed that he had indeed spent all his money on share dealing in one month. Client could not prove that the father was employed. The attorney instructed the client to take the paternal grandparents to court and when the grandmother appeared she agreed to pay our client maintenance at R1 000 per month and buy the children's school stationery and uniforms. She also offered to buy food for the children every two weeks. The attorney also arranged for the grandmother to have access to the children.

The attorney was advised that the grandmother honoured her obligations and was also taking care of the children from time to time. The Family Advocate subsequently issued a recommendation that our client have primary care of the children and that the father have reasonable access.

Our client was thrilled with the results in both the High Court and maintenance matters.

Case Study 4

Ndlandu v Minister of Home Affairs

4

Background

Mr N, a citizen of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), arrived in South Africa on 1 January 2003 after fleeing the DRC. In December 2002, while working as a truck driver, he narrowly avoided colliding with a motorcade transporting President Joseph Kabila. He was arrested and severely assaulted by the President's security guards. Because his father had previously been a senior security officer under Mobutu Sese Seko, Mr N was suspected of involvement in an attempt on the President's life. He was detained, threatened with prosecution and the death penalty, and eventually managed to escape from detention.

Mr N applied for refugee status in South Africa. His application was rejected by a Refugee Status Determination Officer in 2006. He appealed to the Refugee Appeal Board (RAB), but a single member dismissed his appeal in September 2009. Mr N was not informed of this decision until October 2020—approximately 11 years later. By then, almost two decades had passed since his original application.

Judgment

The High Court reviewed and set aside the RAB's decision. It found that the decision was unlawful and procedurally unfair. The appeal had been decided by a single RAB member despite the statutory requirement for a properly constituted Board. The RAB also failed to properly consider Mr N's individual circumstances, including the risk of persecution, imprisonment and execution if he returned to the DRC. It was irrational to expect him to exhaust internal remedies in the DRC when the authorities themselves posed the alleged risk of persecution.

The Court decided that the matter should not be sent back for reconsideration. Given the extraordinary delays, administrative failures and the fact that the evidence supporting Mr N's claim was essentially undisputed, the Court found that it was in as good a position as the relevant authority to decide the matter. It concluded that the proper outcome was a "foregone conclusion": Mr N met the requirements for refugee status.

The Court therefore set aside the RAB decision, upheld Mr N's appeal and granted him refugee status. The respondents were also ordered to pay the costs of the proceedings, including the costs of two counsel.

Client Case

Case Study 5

5

Pro bono work is central to Lomas-Walker Attorneys' ethos and commitment to the community, extending beyond professional obligation.

Through ProBono.Org, our attorneys provide legal assistance to people who cannot afford representation, advancing access to justice while gaining valuable professional perspective.

A significant matter concerned opposed eviction applications against eight elderly and vulnerable residents of Golden Land Estate, who maintained that they had purchased their homes from the developer. Despite complex disputes and counterclaims, the applications were dismissed, demonstrating the importance of legal representation for vulnerable people.

As ProBono.Org celebrates its 20-year anniversary, we thank it for enabling attorneys to serve their communities and expand access to justice. We are proud to support its continuing work.

Children's Project Cases since 2014

6

The Children's project that started in 2014 as the One-Child-a Year (OCAY) movement, has grown from having only two categories - once-off advised cases and referred cases. During the past few years it has expanded to include undocumented children, mediation, and social justice cases.

The OCAY project has dealt with a wide range of cases concerning the protection of vulnerable children and young people, particularly those experiencing abuse, inadequate care, documentation issues causing barriers to attend school or to receive health care, nationality and citizenship difficulties, and challenges in accessing appropriate alternative care. The project also dealt with family and guardianship-related matters, including birth registration and the removal or regulation of parental rights and responsibilities.

Most children's cases take a long time to reach resolution. Many cases span the period from June 2018 to date. The dedication and tenacity of the legal profession in acting in the interest of justice have been extraordinary.

A significant category involved child protection and alternative care, including cases of children who had experienced physical abuse, required removal from unsafe environments, or needed placement in foster care, children's homes or other specialised facilities. In one case, a child who had been physically abused by a step-parent required extensive medical treatment, including surgery, and remained in a children's home while social workers struggled to secure suitable foster care and schooling that could accommodate the child's additional needs. The project still monitors the case. In another case, both parents were so intoxicated that they did not realise a rodent was attacking their six week old baby, resulting in the baby losing its hand. After months of delay by the Department of Social Development, the legal practitioner secured a court order for foster care. A third case which still requires monitoring with counsel, is where the mother allowed her boyfriend to cause severe brain injuries to her child, resulting in the child having special needs. The project opposes the mother's current application to resume care of the child.

Client Cases

OCAI also dealt with cases involving children and young people with disabilities or special needs, including securing lawful residence and appropriate long-term care, and advocating for access to occupational therapy, stable accommodation and a more secure immigration status. A further important area was birth registration, identity documents and citizenship, particularly for children born to foreign nationals or children whose nationality was uncertain. These matters included difficulties obtaining South African birth certificates, correcting inaccurate information on birth records, establishing nationality, and assisting young people who had reached adulthood to obtain identity documents and apply for citizenship.

OCAI also addressed systemic administrative barriers where the Department of Home Affairs had blocked or delayed applications. In one significant citizenship matter, originating in 2018, legal proceedings were ultimately instituted in the High Court, resulting in an order with costs in September 2026 confirming the applicant's citizenship rights and requiring the relevant administrative steps to be taken to lift the block the Department had placed on the father's identity document.

Another pending case involved a young adult who had lived in South Africa for many years after being left in the care of another person, and who required assistance to obtain a birth certificate, identity document and ultimately South African citizenship through naturalisation.

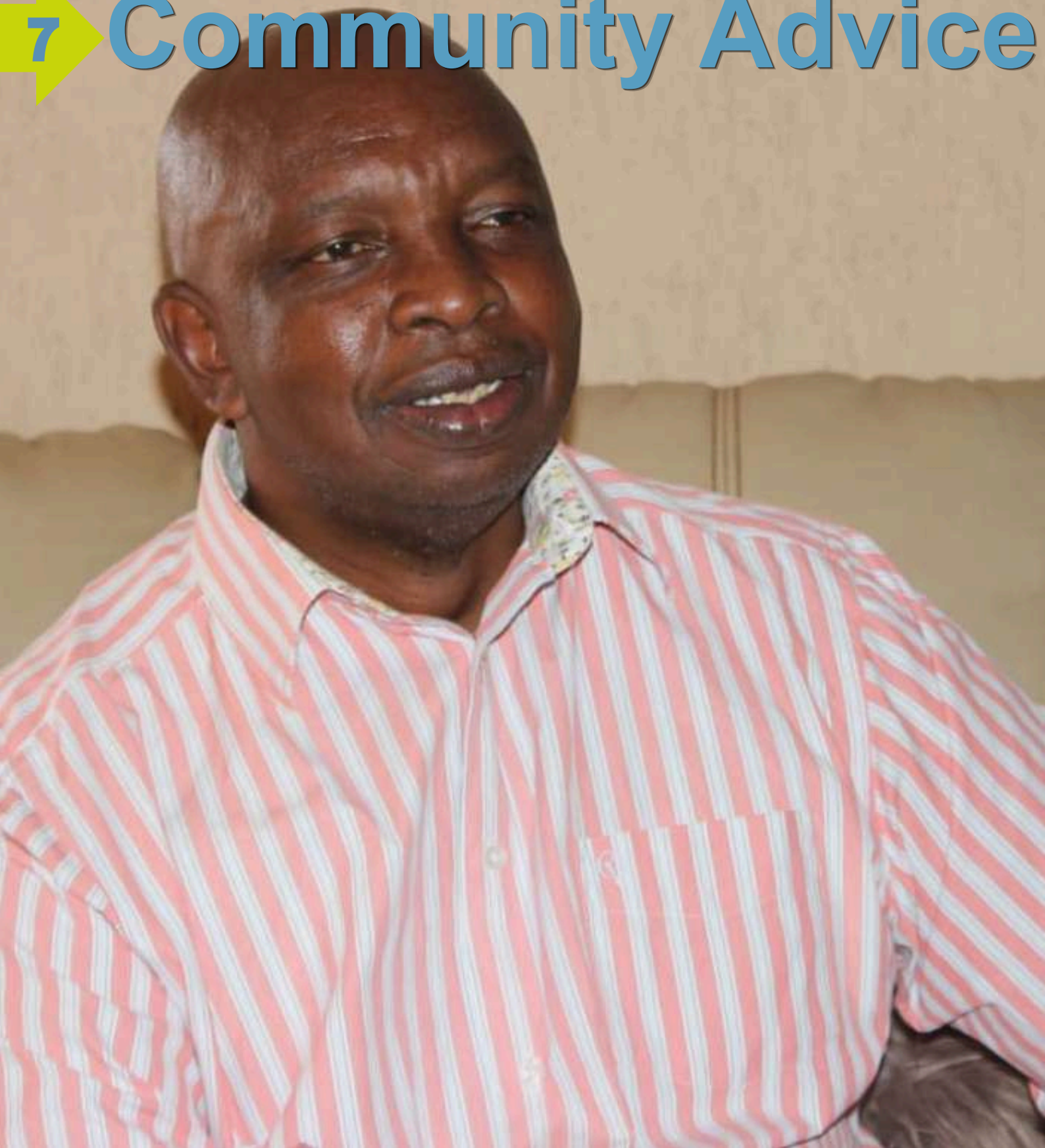
Overall, the cases demonstrate OCAI's role in addressing both individual child-protection needs and broader systemic barriers affecting children's access to safety, alternative care, identity, documentation, citizenship and long-term security in South Africa.

“As you already know, through lifting others we lift ourselves. Just for doing the work you are doing advancing social justice by lifting others, you too are winners”.

Thuli Madonsela, Guest Speaker,
2025 Pro Bono Awards

“Thanks to the courteous and cordial service from the lady at reception.”
ProBono.Org client

7 Community Advice



Orange Farm Human Rights Advice Centre

Our relationship with ProBono.Org goes back many years while I was still a young man. Since our relationship began it has become simpler for our disadvantaged communities to get access to justice and to their constitutional human rights. Our relationship is growing. We have groomed six young community paralegals who are active and know and understand the work of ProBono.Org.

There have been many achievements in empowering the community on the law. When people struggle with funding for lawyers, ProBono.Org gives them hope that they are human beings who deserve to be respected. We receive many people referred by different courts in the region who appear there without legal representation. The courts are aware that our advice office is nearby and that we can refer matters to ProBono.Org.

We congratulate ProBono.Org on its 20 years of achievement. We look forward to another 20 years as the challenges remain, with issues such as housing and evictions. There are also new challenges such as statelessness and xenophobia where people need assistance.

Richard (“Bricks”) Mokolo

Community Advice



Offices

Messina Legal Advice Office (MLAO)

Messina Legal Advice Office's relationship with ProBono.Org started around 2013, when we first joined its workshops and community outreach events. Over time this relationship has grown into a meaningful and valuable partnership. ProBono.Org's support, including funding support, has made it easier for us to offer services to people in need and to deal with the legal and social challenges they face.

Since 2018 our organisation has been part of ProBono.Org's workshops and public awareness campaigns that educate communities about their rights and responsibilities. In 2021 our organisation began a birth registration programme which has brought to light the significant challenges faced by undocumented children and their families. Many of the parents we assist are unemployed and cannot afford the costs associated with DNA testing, which is required to establish the biological parentage.

Our organisation operates in a strategically located border town that attracts migrants seeking safety and economic opportunities. Some settle in Musina and surrounding areas and establish families. Many children are born into circumstances in which one or both parents lack the necessary documents. Consequently, these children might remain unregistered without legal identification documents, placing them at risk of being stateless and limiting their access to basic rights, services and opportunities.

We are also sincerely grateful to ProBono.Org for facilitating collaboration between our office and the legal practitioners in Limpopo Province. This partnership has strengthened our ability to assist clients whose cases require legal representation in court.

As we celebrate ProBono.Org's 20th anniversary, we extend our heartfelt appreciation for its longstanding commitment to advancing access to justice and supporting community-based organisations working directly with vulnerable communities. Our partnership demonstrates the value of collaboration in addressing complex social and legal challenges. We look forward to continuing this partnership and building on our shared commitment to a more inclusive and equitable society in which every child has the opportunity to be registered, recognised and protected by law regardless of their parents' nationality or circumstances.

Jacob Matakanye

Community Advice



Dobsonville Human Rights Advice Centre.

Our partnership with ProBono.Org: History, Achievements and the Need for Continued Legal Support

Background and History of the Partnership

The Dobsonville Human Rights Advice Centre is a community-based advice office in Soweto that has been working with ProBono.Org for many years to promote access to justice and protect the rights of vulnerable and marginalised communities.

Over the years, our organisation has assisted community members who experience difficulties accessing legal services because of financial constraints and other social challenges. Through our partnership with ProBono.Org, we have been able to refer clients in need of legal assistance to qualified attorneys who provide pro bono legal services.

ProBono.Org has played an important role in facilitating legal representation for our beneficiaries, including court representation and legal advice. This partnership has helped strengthen access to justice and ensured that vulnerable community members receive the legal support they need.

Support for Vulnerable and Marginalised Communities

Through our collaboration with ProBono.Org, we have assisted vulnerable groups, including undocumented and stateless children, refugees and asylum seekers. These communities often face significant barriers when accessing legal documentation, essential services and protection of their fundamental human rights.

The partnership has contributed to addressing these challenges by connecting affected individuals with appropriate legal assistance and promoting awareness of their rights.

Legal Clinics and Pro Bono Legal Services

For approximately ten years, we have facilitated monthly legal clinics in collaboration with legal practitioners and law firms, including Hogan Lovells and Norton Rose Fulbright (Deney's), among others.

These legal clinics have provided community members with opportunities to obtain legal advice, understand their legal options and receive referrals for further assistance where necessary.

These services have made a meaningful contribution to improving access to justice for individuals and families who would otherwise struggle to afford legal assistance.

Victim Empowerment and Psychosocial Support

In response to the ongoing challenges experienced by vulnerable community members, our organisation is also implementing a Victim Empowerment Programme. Through this programme, we provide psychosocial support to beneficiaries who require assistance while navigating legal processes and dealing with difficult personal circumstances.

We recognise that legal challenges are often accompanied by emotional distress, trauma, financial hardship and family difficulties. For this reason, the combination of legal assistance and psychosocial support is essential to promoting the well-being, dignity and empowerment of affected individuals.

Continued collaboration with ProBono.Org strengthens our ability to provide comprehensive support to beneficiaries who require both legal intervention and appropriate psychosocial assistance.

The demand for affordable and accessible legal services remains high, particularly among low-income households, women and children affected by gender-based violence, refugees, asylum seekers and other marginalised groups.

The services provided through this partnership are essential in addressing legal challenges involving deceased estates, divorce, child access, maintenance, family disputes, mediation, wills and other matters requiring professional legal intervention.

We value the commitment of ProBono.Org and the legal practitioners who have contributed their expertise and time to assisting individuals who cannot afford private legal services.

Together, we can continue building communities where everyone has access to justice, legal protection and the opportunity to live with dignity.

Martha Chauke



Community Advice



WATLA – Women and the Law

WATLA's journey began in 2014 as a small, informal group of women who came together to share information and address social and legal challenges affecting their communities. As the need for accessible legal information and assistance became increasingly evident, our relationship with ProBono.Org played a significant role in strengthening and expanding this work.

Over the years, this partnership has enabled WATLA to extend its work across key practical areas of law, closing access gaps for communities. Through legal information workshops, Will-drafting clinics and referral services, we have empowered and strengthened community members' capacity to understand, claim and defend their legal rights. Working with ProBono.Org has been vital to WATLA's mission — not just raising awareness, but putting legal knowledge and assistance directly into people's hands.

Rita Tladi

Offices



Thusang Morwalo Advice Centre

Working with ProBono.Org has brought a significant change to my community of Kagiso, in the West Rand region of Gauteng. In 2015 I joined the Thusang Morwalo Advice Office to assist marginalised community members. In the past 11 years I have worked with ProBono.Org from organising community workshops or outreaches to having one-on-one meetings with clients, and ProBono.Org assisting in finding legal representation. The best day of my work is when a client comes back with feedback on a successful case and how much they have learnt about access to justice. I was honoured to receive the Paralegal award in 2021 and 2026.

Boitumelo (Tumi) Mthombeni

Client Feedback

A man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt and a dark blazer, is looking down at a document. A woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue top and a beaded necklace, is also looking at the document. They are both focused on the paper, which is held by the man. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall.

“Yesterday was such a blessing. It meant so much to have a team that truly listened and showed genuine commitment to helping me re-establish my relationship with my children.”

Client Feedback



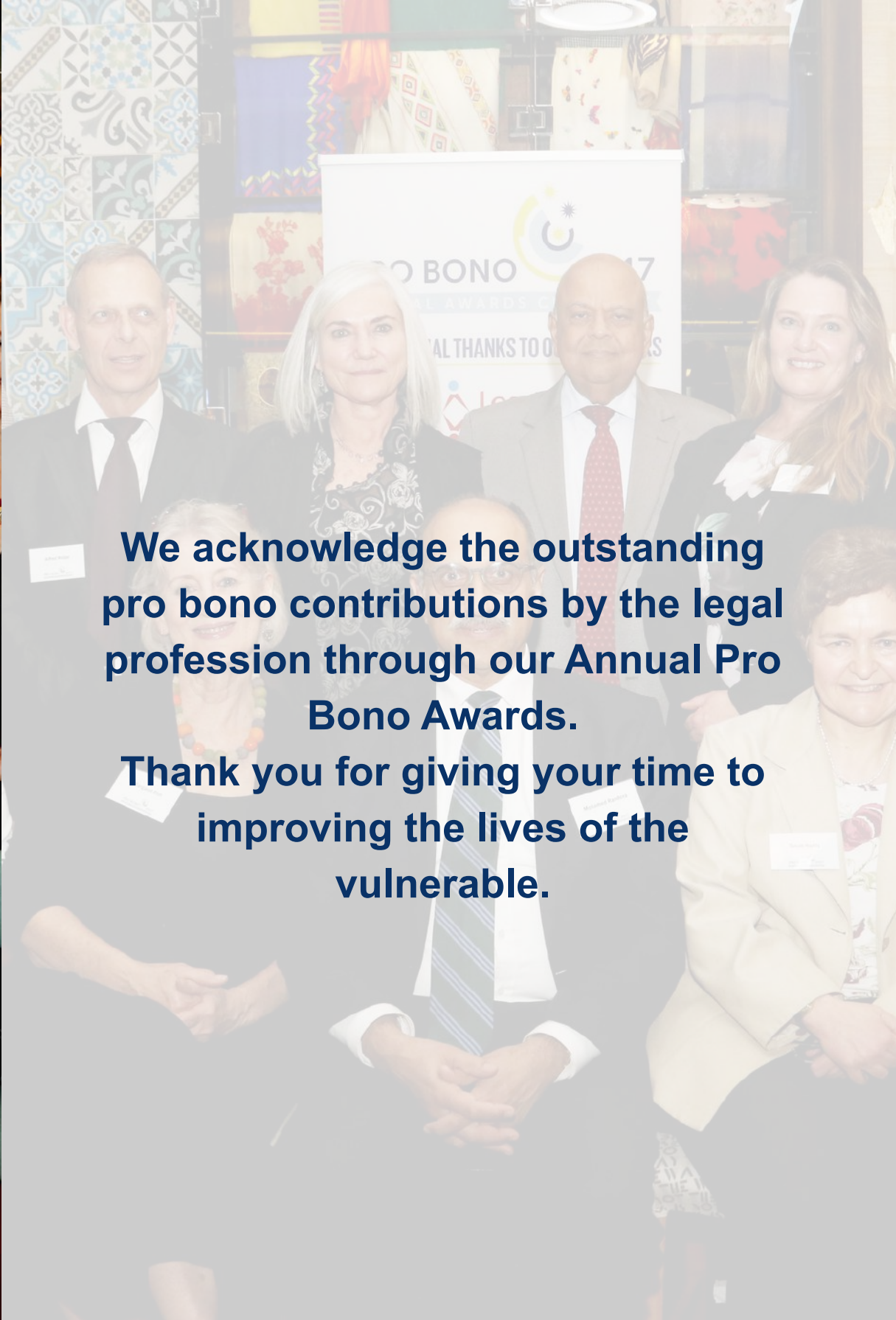
“Although the matter I sought legal advice on could not be taken up by your organisation, the calm, cordial and firm service offered is much worth saying thank you to everyone.”

“How I wish there will be more support for service providers like ProBono.Org. What an enlivening synergy between government, corporate SA and civil society. Truly remarkable.”



Pro Bono Awards





**We acknowledge the outstanding
pro bono contributions by the legal
profession through our Annual Pro
Bono Awards.
Thank you for giving your time to
improving the lives of the
vulnerable.**

Long-standing

We pay tribute to our long-standing staff members

Johannesburg

Pretica Singh – 20 years



2006 – 2026
Financial Manager

Elsabe Steenhuisen – 15 years



2011 – 2026
Elsabe volunteered at the Help Desk at Johannesburg Civil Regional Divorce Court (2011 – 2018); consulted part-time on the South and East Rand project (2013 - 2015), and she became the part-time consultant for the OCAY (One-Child-a-Year) project (2016 to date).

Fina Diba – 14 years



2012 – 2026.
Fina was the Receptionist until 2016, when she took a short break. She returned in 2017 as Administrator/Data Capturer.

Margaret Fish – 12 years



2014 – 2026
Operations, Communications and Grants Manager

Nonkulumo (Nkuli) Zuke – 11 years



2015 – 2026
Receptionist

Nonkululeko (Nonku) Nomatshaka - 10 years



2016 – 2026
General Worker

Durban



Gugulethu Makhanya – 13 years
2013 - 2026
Administrator

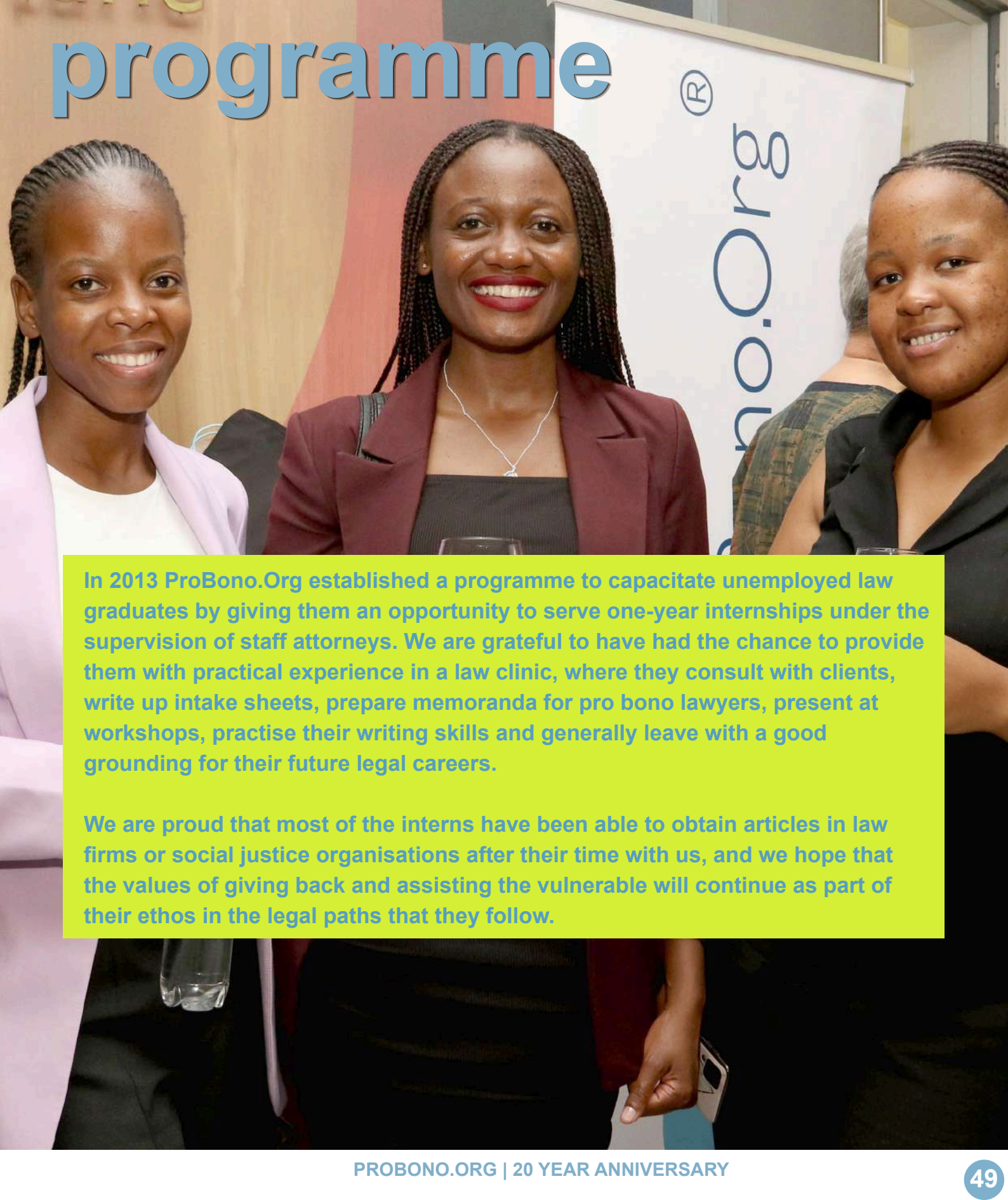
staff



The internship



programme

A photograph of three Black women standing in front of a white banner with the ProBono.Org logo. The woman on the left is wearing a light pink blazer over a white top. The woman in the center is wearing a maroon blazer over a black top and a silver necklace. The woman on the right is wearing a black top. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The banner behind them has the text 'ProBono.Org' and a registered trademark symbol (®).

In 2013 ProBono.Org established a programme to capacitate unemployed law graduates by giving them an opportunity to serve one-year internships under the supervision of staff attorneys. We are grateful to have had the chance to provide them with practical experience in a law clinic, where they consult with clients, write up intake sheets, prepare memoranda for pro bono lawyers, present at workshops, practise their writing skills and generally leave with a good grounding for their future legal careers.

We are proud that most of the interns have been able to obtain articles in law firms or social justice organisations after their time with us, and we hope that the values of giving back and assisting the vulnerable will continue as part of their ethos in the legal paths that they follow.

Donors

Thank you to our donors who continue to provide the necessary financial resources we need to carry out our work. It is through their generosity that ProBono.Org is able to ensure that Section 34 of our Constitution is realised and that our vision to provide equitable access to justice for all who live in South Africa is advanced. We pay a special tribute to Gerald Kraak of the Atlantic Philanthropies who provided the first and only grant to ProBono.Org, as well as making a final contribution to a sustainability fund once Atlantic withdrew.

Donors

- **The Atlantic Philanthropies**
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- **Belgian Cooperation**
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- **Foundation for Human Rights**
- **Freedom House**
- **Gauteng Law Council**
- **HCI Foundation**
- **Investec Women's Trust**
- **Johannesburg Bar Council**
- **Johannesburg Legal Centre**
- **KZN Law Society**
- **L Wilson Trust**
- **Legal Aid South Africa**
- **LegalWise**
- **Millennium Trust**
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- **C S Mott Foundation**
- **Open Society Foundation of South Africa**
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- **SASSETA**
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- **University of Birmingham**
- **Varsity College**

- **AshrafulAid**
- **Spiritual Chords**
- **A B Moosa**

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- **Fasken**
- **Webber Wentzel**
- **Werksmans**
- **ENSAfrica**

“The friendly greetings on entry of other staff topped it all. It melted my heart. It jolted me to the glaring reality of service in SA.”

ProBono.Org client

ProBono.Org[®]



As the
world

**2026 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
LAUREATE, JUDGE NAVI
PILLAY, TO BE CONFERRED
ON 10 DECEMBER 2026**



THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

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Telephone: 031 301 6178

CAPE TOWN: JDN House, 26A Shortmarket Street. Cape Town 8001
Telephone: 087 470 0721