

INTRODUCTION

In this issue we are appealing to pro bono attorneys to assist with our special One Child a Year Campaign and to volunteer to spend time at our numerous legal clinics, especially the refugee and housing legal clinics and the high court help desks. We introduce you to our mentorship project, profile a marriage case and introduce a pilot project where smart phones are being provided to assist community advice offices.

We introduce six new staff members who joined ProBono.Org's three offices this year. ●

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Mentorship Project

Annelie du Plessis

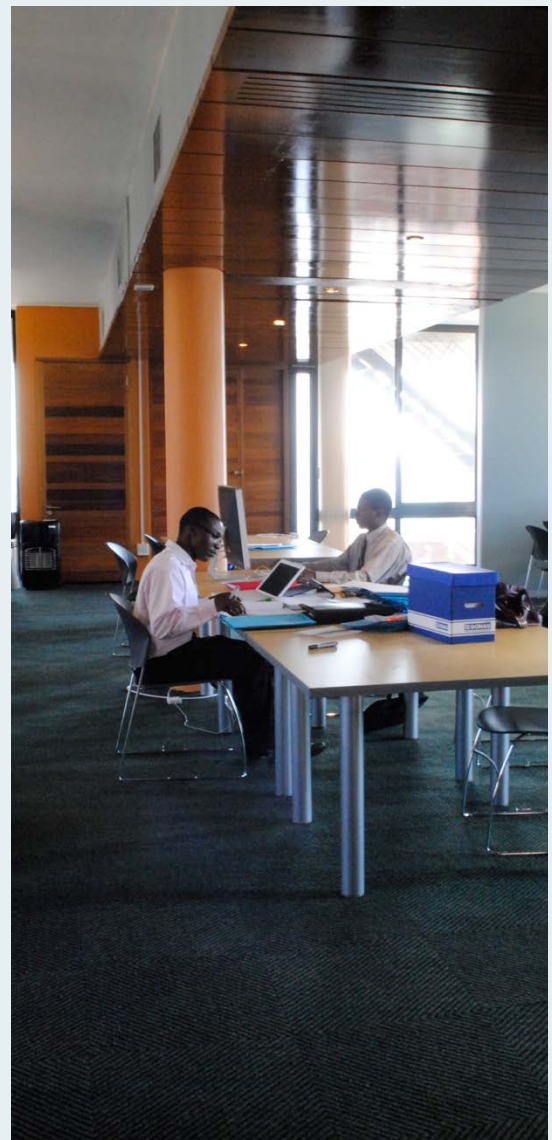
ProBono.Org is implementing a new project this year, that aims to improve the quality of the service we offer our clients, by focusing on mentorship.

The aim of this project is to link less experienced attorneys and advocates with more experienced legal professionals in the field who can guide, advise and assist them. Those unfamiliar with a new area of law may wish to ask a mentor about specific matters, strategies to adopt in cases, procedures applicable, policy and legislative developments and other pertinent information that may afford our clients a better quality service.

We believe that this platform, facilitated by our offices, will provide an invaluable chance for knowledgeable practitioners to provide information, pass on knowledge and enhance the capacity of lawyers who are starting out or are not familiar with a new area of law.

We hope to recruit mentors in all our projects (covering issues of housing, family, consumer, refugee and child law) to be of assistance to new and existing legal practitioners on our panel. In this way, mentors fulfill their pro bono hours, while the mentees will be supported, gaining a different perspective and/or learning a new skill. We believe this can be done telephonically, electronically or in some cases in person.

**If you would like to sign up to be a mentor please contact:
erica@probono.org.za or annelie@probono.org.za.**



Pro bono attorneys and advocates needed for our One Child a Year Campaign



Annelie du Plessis

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society and ProBono.Org has created a special project, the One Child a Year Campaign, aimed at providing legal assistance to children in order for them to realise their full potential and live the life imagined for them in the Constitution. The aim of the project is not only to secure legal representation for children but to ensure that their cases are finalised in a holistic manner, and that such finalisation is to the advantage of the child. The project has a special focus on children who enter the legal or child protection system but fall through the cracks, experiencing trauma and neglect.

Since its inception in 2014, this project has gained momentum and we receive requests for legal assistance for children on an ongoing basis. These referrals come from various children's courts in the area, from child protection organisations, teachers, social workers and concerned parents. At the moment we have about 15 committed legal practitioners but we would like to increase this number to at least 100 in order to meet our caseload.

We would be pleased if you would get involved by serving on our panel of pro bono lawyers, social workers, counsellors and/or psychologists and by giving one small person the support he or she needs. We plan to host a number of training workshops throughout the year to deepen our understanding of dealing with these matters, and have a number of experts we can call on to provide guidance and advice. We will also use mentors in this project as an additional resource.

Once you have indicated your willingness to assist, we would be happy to provide any further information you may require. Please contact Annelie or Luke at 011 339 6080 or luke@probono.org.za / annelie@probono.org.za.



HOUSING

Legal clinics and help desks seek pro bono attorneys



The Johannesburg office of ProBono.Org holds a refugee legal clinic every Thursday and a housing legal clinic every second Friday. These are staffed by pro bono attorneys, who consult with our clients. In certain circumstances matters may require further legal work, but in many instances advice and assistance can be given there and then. We have not yet filled all the slots for these legal clinics. We also seek lawyers to staff our help desk at the South Gauteng High Court which runs from Monday to Thursday.

If you are interested in participating or need more information, please contact Phumi:

Phumi@probono.org.za ●

Case study - Married without her knowledge

Our client AM required assistance to have her marriage declared null and void and the registry rectified by the Department of Home Affairs after she found out that she was married to someone she had never met. AM had thought that she was applying for a job shortly after finishing school, when in reality she was being scammed to obtain her fingerprints, her identity document details and her signature. When she wanted to study some years later, the study institution told her that she was married in community of property. She was shocked. After initially attempting to deal with the matter herself, she turned to ProBono.Org, who referred the matter to Clarks Attorneys.

The Department of Home Affairs was unhelpful in resolving the matter on an amicable basis, telling the attorneys to proceed to court. Therefore, they approached the High Court for a declaratory order that AM's marriage be declared void *ab initio*, and that the Department of Home Affairs be directed to vary their records to indicate that AM had never been married. Marriage, and particularly one in community of property, has a substantial impact on a person's status and financial future, and if AM did not have the assistance of ProBono.Org, and in due course that of Clarks and advocate van der Berg, there is no telling what prejudice she may have suffered in future. We are pleased to be able to record a successful outcome.

Social media for social change

Tshenolo Masha

The work of community advice offices (CAOs) remains pivotal in realising the objectives of access to justice. Many advice offices struggle with the harsh realities of not having funding and operating in an environment that is not adequately resourced. They encounter challenges that require instant access to information or referral of their matter. In some instances a simple task like sending an email becomes a stumbling block to ensuring that much needed assistance is provided to a desperate member of the community.

Access to technology these days does not have to mean a bulky desktop PC. Today's technology allows for data collection, office management and communication to be easily accessible from hand-held devices. The most important advantage is that one can use social media, which promotes interactivity and connectedness which are at the very core of social change efforts.

Social change on social media platforms is not restricted to the advertising of goods and services, but these platforms can be used to expand the reach of community based organisations such as the CAOs. They can use the social media platforms in their area of operations to disseminate information on



Tshenolo Masha with Boitumelo Ntombeni, paralegal at the Thusang Morwalo Community Advice Centre in Kagiso

important legal matters and events that could benefit the community as a whole.

The Device Pilot Project is being rolled out in six CAOs situated between Gauteng and Limpopo. The project will provide smart phones to the CAOs for a period of 10 months. During this period they will be using well-known applications such as WhatsApp, Gmail and Facebook to convey important information related to cases, data collection,

events, workshops, meetings and other activities. The project's main objective is to determine if these platforms can be used effectively for data collection and the legal empowerment of the community. This project is also about shaping the manner in which CAOs can use these social media platforms in an innovative way. As Tom Freston, the former CEO of MTV said,

“Innovation is taking two things that already exist and putting them together in a new way.”●

Staff

Welcome to our new staff members:

Johannesburg

*Richard Chemaly –
Strategist and media liaison*

Richard acquired a B.Com LLB from the University of the Free State in 2013, after which he completed his articles at Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr. Richard joined the Johannesburg office of ProBono.

Org in February 2016 as a research strategist and media liaison person. He hopes one day to be an international public interest lawyer specialising in multinational corruption, but stresses that this would only be after he's decided to grow up.





Romeo Gumede - Intern

Romeo is originally from Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and is an LLB graduate from the University of Fort Hare. He is currently pursuing an LLM in banking and international commercial law at the University of Johannesburg. His areas of interest are housing, deceased estates, family and consumer law. In his spare time he coaches debating to high school kids and participates in various community activities.



Ntombizodwa Bhengu - Intern

Ntombi completed her LLB degree at Wits University in 2015 and is currently enrolled for an LLM in international law at Wits. Before joining ProBono.Org she was an intern at the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA), and has worked as a research assistant for the head of the school of international relations at Wits University. Ntombi has built an academic interest in international law because she wants to have a deeper grasp of issues in the intersection of law and human rights.



Pretoria

Refilwe Mmusi - Intern

Refilwe completed her LLB in 2005 at North West University, Mafikeng. She has a keen interest in human rights law and aspires one day to become a human rights lawyer.

We are very happy to welcome our new staff members on board and believe that they will be assets to our offices.



Durban

Trisha Dhoda

Trisha was admitted as an attorney in March 2012. She is running the consumer/small claims help desk, the housing clinic and the Masters Office help desk.



Nomfundo Buthelezi

Nomfundo is a new intern in the Durban office. She has an LLB degree from the University of KwaZulu Natal (PMB). Nomfundo is passionate about family law and would like to open her own mediation practice in the future.



Lusanda Chili

Lusanda has been an intern for the past year and is leaving to take up a position at Lexis Nexis. We wish her good luck in this new endeavour.



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