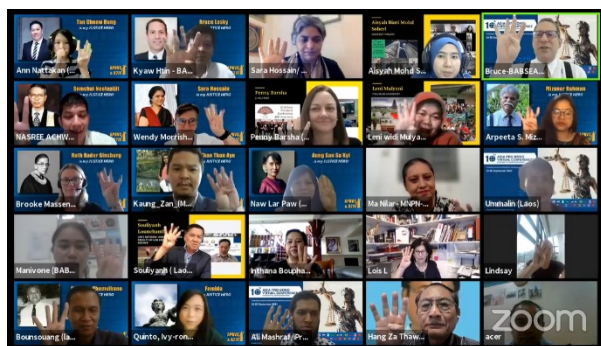


# 10<sup>th</sup> Asia Pro Bono Virtual Conference and Access to Justice Exchange Report



The 10<sup>th</sup> Asia Pro Bono Virtual Conference and Access to Justice Exchange (Conference/Exchange) was held under the theme of “Celebrating a Decade of Collaboratively Strengthening Justice & Rule of Law”, from September 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. With the continuous efforts to emphasize pro bono work, access to justice, rule of law and community empowerment, the Conference/Exchange once again reflected deeply on furthering the outreach of pro bono ethos, not just regionally, but also globally.



The Conference/Exchange drew a total of 670 registrants from 43 countries, worldwide, including 145 presenters who participated in Conference/Exchange sessions, amidst the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The extensive program consisted of 33 formal insightful and thought-provoking sessions:

1. Opening Plenary-Celebrating a Decade of Collaboratively Strengthening Justice & Rule of Law
2. When Alternatives to Imprisonment are Abusive;
3. Effective Non-Litigation Strategies for People Who Use Drugs;
4. What Pro Bono Lawyers Could/Should Do to Promote Linguistic Justice & Diversity ; (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iran as Case Study);
5. Promoting Environmental and Climate Justice Through Pro Bono and Public Interest Law Practice;
6. Optimal Legal Clinics - Perspectives of Access to Justice Actors on In-Person and Virtual Clinics;
7. Adapting to Change, amid the Covid-19 Pandemic - Legal Empowerment Practice in Southeast Asia;
8. The Global Refugee Forum Legal Community Pledge, Progress Made and Next Steps;
9. Assessing Justice Needs in Laos - the Development and Implementation of a Community Legal Needs Survey;
10. The SDG Legal Initiative: Onboarding the Legal Sector to Further the Sustainable Development Goals;
11. Cultural Justice Performance;
12. Bar Association Support for Pro Bono;
13. Eighteen Months of Remote Legal Services – Best Practices and Silver Linings;

14. Mobilising Resources to Strengthen Pro Bono;
15. Pushing the Boundaries of Pro Bono - Meeting the Needs of Sovereign States for Investor-State Dispute Settlement and Treaty Renegotiation, in a Time of Pandemic;
16. ESG & NGO: Prospect & Possibilities;
17. Pro Bono in Asia - Celebrating the Decade Gone and the Decade Ahead;
18. Doing Pro Bono the International Development Way;
19. Juvenile Justice Systems: Shortcomings and Necessary Interventions;
20. Advocating for Justice and Accountability for the Rohingya;
21. New & Innovative Methods of Legal Dissemination – Experiences from Lao PDR;
22. Migrant Issues from the Viewpoint of Countries of Origin and Countries of Destination – Pro Bono Support and Challenges;
23. Regional Advocacy for Decriminalization of Abortion in Asia and Role of Pro-Bono Partners;
24. Beyond Refuge - Lessons Learned from Refugee Protection Strategies in the Global South;
25. Pro Bono Reporting and Polices - Ensuring Quality, Impact, Guidance and Inspiration;
26. The ‘Beyond Refuge’ Summer School on Refugee Rights and Forced Migration;
27. The Intersection of Pro Bono, Access to Justice, Rule of Law and Justice Education;
28. Keep Law in Your Hands - LannPya App and the work of legal professionals in Myanmar;
29. Better Pro Bono for Vulnerable Clients;
30. Defending Civic Space: Strengthening Legal Empowerment Work
31. Refugee Crises and the Need for Collective Measures;
32. Reproductive Rights as Social Rights - Fostering Access and Implementation; and
33. Closing Plenary:
  - Part 1: The Development and Expansion of Regional Pro Bono Roundtables-Bringing Us into the Next Decade of Collaboration
  - Part 2: Closing Plenary: Moving Forward Together



At each session, participants were presented with comprehensive and elaborate background information, which supported issues that surrounded the agenda.

Moreover, the Conference/Exchange embraced a Facebook platform that live streamed many of the Conference/Exchange sessions, with current worldwide numbers reaching over 500,000 persons.

Not only was this year’s Conference/Exchange working language in English, it also provided simultaneous interpretation in seven languages, including Thai, Bengali, Urdu, Nepali, Lao, Myanmar and Hindi. In doing so, this helped to ensure many participants would be able to effectively engage without language barriers.

As always, the Conference/Exchange was much more than presentation and traditional sessions, and was so much more. On Day 1 September 23<sup>rd</sup>, the traditional Access to Justice Cultural Performance was held. This was one of the most enjoyable and valuable moments, and thrilled everyone with a wide range of national songs,



poems and other performances by participants which symbolized freedom, fairness and equality in law.

Equally as fun, as it was inspiring, Day 3 of the event, Sept 24<sup>th</sup>, involved many participants joining in the Global Pro Bono Move, where they “moved” for justice in many different ways, including walking, jogging, running, biking, etc In doing so, they connected to a worldwide network of those who are virtually connected and moving for justice, by having their global yearly kilometers counted.

All of the above was done in the usual professional manner, while never losing the core values of the Conference/Exchange, that distinguishes the Conference/Exchange from so many other events. As happens almost every year, participants have been providing feedback and telling us how “this Conference/Exchange is so different”, how glad they were to be a part of it, and how this Conference/Exchange truly demonstrates effective ways and means to bring diverse communities together.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Conference/Exchange plans began being made for many local, national, and regional follow-ups, with clear objectives and ideas being put forward.

This has included the fantastic group from/working in the Lao PDR that attended the Conference/Exchange. Immediately after the closing of the Conference/Exchange (on Day 4), they began discussing the core planning of the future Conference/Exchange, which will be held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, in September 2022 (dates to be confirmed soon).

We would like to express our profound gratitude to all partners’ contributions. Without their generosity, we would not have been able to financially support over 280 pro bono champions who attended the virtual conference. In addition, we would like to thank all of the presenters, who provided the excellent presentations, shared their pro bono experiences, and created positive discussions on how to develop future pro bono, access to justice and rule of law initiative. Of course, we must thank everyone who participated in the Conference/Exchange.

Once again, the Conference/Exchange has demonstrated it is an unstoppable, positive force. It has truly shown that “from little things big things grow”, “if you want to go fast, go alone”, and “If you want to go far, go together.”

Together, let’s keep growing ~~this~~ the Pro Bono and Access to Justice Movement, so that it goes farther-and farther, and we do it all together.

We look forward to seeing you all again, next year, in Vientiane, Laos. Until then, Keep Calm and Do Pro Bono!

The Conference/Exchange Secretariat

October, 2021

Supporters

