Introduction

The Asia Pro Bono Conference and Access to Justice Exchange (APBC & A2JX) is a trademark of the Asia region. Beginning in 2012 in the Lao PDR, the Asia Pro Bono Conference & A2J Exchange is held each year to emphasize and celebrate pro bono and access to justice related work being conducted throughout Asia, and globally.

The APBC & A2JX has become the largest annual gathering of persons supporting or engaged in access to justice, pro bono and public interest law in Asia. The event provides a key opportunity for stakeholders to develop, explore and share pro bono and access to justice initiatives and projects that strengthen justice and Rule of Law in Asia and internationally.

The APBC & A2JX has proven to be a milestone event every year, emphasizing and celebrating pro bono and access to justice work conducted across Asia and around the world. The APBC & A2JX’s simple and powerful purpose is to promote and further a shared pro bono and access to justice ethos in and beyond Asia. Accordingly, this annual event provides a key opportunity for a diverse array of stakeholders—lawyers, paralegals, academics, law students, jurists, members of civil society, governmental policy makers, and representatives of non-profit organization and for-profit businesses alike—to develop, explore and share pro bono initiatives and projects that strengthen access to justice both in Asia and in other regions of the world.

The philosophy of the APBC & A2JX is unique in that it aims not only to support the annual APBC & A2JX itself, but rather the ever-strengthening Asia and Global Pro Bono and Access to Justice more broadly, beginning with the selection of a different country and local partners to host the APBC & A2JX events each year. More than a mere series of informational talks, the APBC & A2JX is designed primarily as an opportunity for cross-stakeholder engagement, enabling participants to share experiences and to report on longstanding pro bono initiatives as well as on those initiatives that have developed since the previous annual conference. In this way, the APBC & A2JX speaks of both the challenges and successes of the past as well as of the vast potential of new strategies and collaboration to drive the future development of pro bono legal and access to justice culture across Asia.

The event brings together a diverse collection of lawyers, paralegals, academics, law students, jurists, as well as governmental policy makers, civil society, non-profit and for-profit business representatives. In doing so, the event provides participants a unique platform to engage with each other, share and learn, inspire and be inspired by the positive impact of pro bono on the lives of some of the region’s most disadvantaged individuals and marginalised communities.
This year the 11th Asia Pro Bono Conference ("11APBC"), occurring from 16-18, September 2022 in Vientiane, Lao PDR (and partially virtual). The 11APBC, will be a type of hybrid event, being both an in-person event, and will afford semi-limited additional virtual participation. It will host a multitude of diverse sessions, interactive workshops and presentations, all led by experienced local, regional and international participants engaged in supporting and strengthening pro bono initiatives. For participants, the 11APBC offers a genuine opportunity to be an integral part of the Asia and Global Pro Bono Movement as well as to contribute to improving access to justice for the most vulnerable populations.

The Access to Justice Exchange ("A2J Exchange"), occurring from 22-24 September 2022, will be held virtually, and will consist as a series of workshops, forums, and roundtables. In 2022, the A2JX will provide opportunities for conference participants to attend Access to Justice and Rule of Law related sessions, workshops, meetings and other events. These will vary in both thematic focus and in participant groups involved. Some of the events will be open to persons from around the globe to register (via a separate registration process from the 11APBC) while other events and workshops will be conducted through a pre-selection process. Similarly, while some A2JX events focus on the intersection of Pro Bono, Access to Justice and Rule of Law, all will have strong relevance to justice issues in both the Asia region and globally.

**History**

Each year, the APBC & A2JX relocates to a new Asian country, with the most recent two Conference and Exchanges, having been held virtually, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of the previous events has advanced and enriched the successful APBC & A2JX tradition in Asia, including:

- Vientiane, Lao PDR (2012);
- Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (2013);
- Singapore (2014);
- Mandalay, Myanmar (2015);
- Bali, Indonesia (2016);
- Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2017);
- Hong Kong (2018);
- Kathmandu, Nepal (2019);
- Virtually (2020)
- Virtually (2021)
The Conference & Exchange Helps Support the Asia Pro Bono & Access to Justice Movement

The philosophy of the Conference & Exchange is unique because they aim to support the ever-strengthening Asia and Global Pro Bono and Access to Justice Movement more widely. It does this in-part by selecting a specific country and local partners in that country to host the event. It then works to roll it out every year to other countries and partners. The Conference & Exchange is designed to share experiences, report and monitor pro bono initiatives currently being undertaken, as well as those which have developed since the previous year’s Conference & Exchange.

Lao PDR Hosts & Organizers

This year’s Conference & Exchange has returned to the Lao PDR, to both celebrate the event’s 11th anniversary, while also demonstrating the incredible growth of the Pro Bono and Access to Justice Movement, within the Lao PDR, throughout Asia and globally. The Lao PDR was not only chosen due to this being the 11th anniversary, but also due to the strong and effective Pro Bono, Access to Justice and Rule of Law initiatives currently being implemented throughout the country. In organizing the event this year, similar to other years past, there will be a diverse Local Organizing Committee (LOC), comprised of key actors in the Lao PDR justice sector. This LOC will work alongside, and in collaboration with the APBC & A2JX International Secretariat, led by the Global Access to Justice organization BABSEACLE, as well as with the APBC & A2JX Regional and Global Consortium members.
The Objectives of the Conference & Exchange

While the Conference & Exchange have many objectives, a primary one is to support the development of socially aware, legal service providers, who will actively participate, advocate and lead pro bono initiatives as a means to strengthen access to justice on behalf of people in fragile or vulnerable situations. During the Conference & Exchange the aim is to instil and strengthen in the participants the knowledge, shared experiences, skills and values to achieve these goals. To do this, each year the Conference & Exchange addresses a number of key thematic topics and areas of vital interest. This year’s focus includes:

- Access to Justice, Pro Bono and Mediation
- Arts, Culture and Pro Bono Promotion
- Client Centered Lawyering Approaches for Legal Service Providers
- Combating Discrimination Through Pro Bono and other Access to Justice Services
- Combating Gender Based Violence Through Pro Bono and Access to Justice Services
- Combating the Death Penalty Through Pro Bono and other Access to Justice Services
- Cross Border Pro Bono
- Defending Reproductive Rights, Pro Bono and Access to Justice Services
- Developing and Implementing Pro Bono Policies
- Economic Justice and Pro Bono (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)
- Enabling Pro Bono: Systemic Perspectives
- Engaging Pro Bono Support from the Judiciary
- Engaging Youth and New Actors in Pro Bono Initiatives
- Ensuring Disability Rights Protections Through Pro Bono
- Expanding the Asia Pro Bono Roundtable Network
- Inclusive Pro Bono
- Institutionalizing Pro Bono and Access to Justice Systems
- Justice Education and Pro Bono
- Juvenile Justice Pro Bono
- Legal Empowerment and Pro Bono Synergy
- Legal Ethics, Professional Responsibility, Pro Bono and Access to Justice
- Para legalism Pro Bono
- Pro Bono and Access to Justice for Refugees and Forcefully Displaced Persons
- Pro Bono and Access to Justice Public Private Partnerships
- Pro Bono and Access to Justice Reporting Mechanisms
- Pro Bono and Ageing Populations
- Pro Bono Assistance for the Marginalized and Vulnerable
- Pro Bono Awareness – Celebrating and Inspiring Pro Bono Culture Development
- Pro Bono Capacity Building
- Pro Bono Strengthening Through Multi-Sector Engagement
- Pro Bono Support for Climate Justice
- Pro Bono Support for People Who Use Drugs
- Public Interest Law/Strategic Litigation Pro Bono
- Social Enterprise Law Firm Models
- Strengthening Pro Bono Through Technology
- Sustainable Pro Bono and Access to Justice Systems
- The Fundamentals of Pro Bono Services and Systems
- The History of Pro Bono
- The Impact of Pro Bono on the Sustainable Development Goals/Goal 16
- The Intersection and Differences between Pro Bono and Legal Aid
- The Role of Bar Associations in Supporting Pro Bono
What Makes This Conference & Exchange Unique?

We are sometimes asked why should this Conference & Exchange be supported? We believe the answer is simple and is based on the unique and special nature of the event, coupled with its far reaching at-scale impact.

Firstly, the development of the Conference & Exchange and program symbolizes the true collaborative philosophy of real pro bono. Rather than the Conference & Exchange and program being driven by any one organisation, a collective group of renowned individuals and organisations working in the Asia region and around the world have come together as volunteers to ensure the event achieves the standards set out above. This is a true pro bono law network in practice. As a result, each year the program is guaranteed to be rich and diversified with topics that are thematically, contextually and practically related to the national, regional and international issues of the participants attending.

Furthermore, having the Conference & Exchange co-organised by regional and international partners, all coming together to form the Pro Bono Conference & Exchange Consortium, ensures it doubles as a capacity building event for these institutions. When the event is completed, these institutions are left with a much greater knowledge of how to organise similar events in the future, collaboratively or independently.

The Conference & Exchange also strives to ensure that a considerable number of deserving persons from the region are assisted financially and technically in order for them to be able to attend.

This is done in many ways including:

- The use of Conference & Exchange sponsorship donations specifically targeted for this purpose
- The use of registration fees from fully paying participants
- The donated use of Conference & Exchange passes to cover registration fees
- Assisting partners to write and develop funding proposals to seek support for them to be able to attend
- Finding shared, low cost accommodations, including dormitory stays
- The donated use of frequent flyer miles to assist in covering air travel

Furthermore, The Conference & Exchange formally connects the global pro bono drive with other similarly situated movements including Legal Empowerment, Justice Education, Legal Aid, Access to Justice, Rule of Law, Legal Ethics/Professional Responsibility and others. In doing so it is recognized that they are inseparable when working to really achieve access to justice at-scale. This helps to create a progressive catalyst between groups that are often “silied” from each other and builds in synergies not often seen in other events of this type.

The Conference & Exchange is also organized in a manner that focuses on ensuring the event is interactive and not simply a “talking-head fest”. All sessions are planned in detail, with experienced facilitators, working in unison with the other presenters. They developed session plans in advance that include both the information substance that will be discussed as well as the varied, interactive methodologies that are used to deliver the information. In doing so the Conference & Exchange is often considered one of the most interesting, professional and fun events of its kind by persons who have attended similar Conference & Exchanges worldwide.
Cost Effective Nature of the Conference & Exchange

The Conference & Exchange is organised in a very professional but cost saving manner. These savings help to ensure that a significant amount of the revenue raised for the event is used to support deserving persons to attend from the region that otherwise would not be able to. It is very often these persons who are some of the key providers of pro bono services and are instrumental in the pro bono movement.

One of the Conference & Exchange’s main goals is to ensure the attendance of participants who are able to fully support themselves, and then to use much of the Conference & Exchange revenues to assist in providing support for many deserving individuals who are not able to do so due to financial restrictions and means.

We would also very much like to have you involved in this year's Conference & Exchange and hope that some of your team will be able to join us in Lao PDR (and virtually).

You can find further information on the Conference & Exchange on the website: www.probonoconference.org

For further information on how to support the 11APBC & A2JX including sponsorship, please contact the 11APBC & A2JX International Secretariat at: APBC-Secretariat@asiapbc.org

Please our thanks to you at both a professional and personal level.

The Asia Pro Bono Conference & Exchange International Secretariat