

MEETING OF THE ROLE UK PROGRAMME STRATEGIC FORUM

4 FEBRUARY, 2021

Advocates for International Development's (A4ID) Rule of Law Expertise (ROLE UK) Programme (hereafter, the Programme) prioritises the strategic input of its stakeholders, the UK legal pro bono community and wider rule of law sector. The Programme's bi-annual Strategic Forum seeks to facilitate dialogue with the Programme's stakeholders and ensure the Programme is accountable to the sectors whose work it supports.

In the fourth meeting of the Strategic Forum, held on 4 February 2021, 19 organisations convened via Zoom to discuss the strategic development of the ROLE UK programme as it enters its third year in April 2021. In light of the continued restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the forum offered an opportunity for members to discuss their proposed workplans for 2021 and a platform to reflect on how the Programme can best assist them to deliver impactful legal pro bono technical assistance. The feedback from these breakout rooms will help guide the strategic development of the Programme in the year ahead and beyond.

ROLE UK PROGRAMME: BI-ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS & MOVING FORWARD

Since the Strategic Forum meeting on August 2020, the Programme has faced the challenge of having its operations and budget reduced to the minimum viable level due to cuts to the UK's ODA budget. The Programme has retained its staff team but has only been able to offer support to new activities that were cost-neutral, and paused the onboarding of new partnerships. Despite this challenge, the ROLE UK Programme supported 16 activities across 9 active partnerships over the last 6 months. The Knowledge Hub workshops engaged over 100 participants, and the Programme's Coordination Facility delivered 6 coordination events which engaged over 260 distinct organisations.

As we move into the third year of the Programme, we expect to continue to facilitate partnership work, provide logistical and strategic support, and in some cases, offer funding support to remote activity.

Development Unit

Over the past 6 months, the Development Unit has continued to support remote activity within partnerships. The Programme has also supported some activities which allowed for in-country participants to safely gather physically as international peers joined remotely.

Some examples of these activities included facilitating the management of the Uganda Supreme Court's case files, and a two-day strategy session to tackle the increasing number of death sentences handed down in homicide cases involving victims with albinism in Malawi. The Programme also has new activities in the pipeline, including a consultation to produce an outline for legal curricula in Malawi and a new partnership between UP Zambia, DLA Piper and Irish Rule of Law International to tackle the over-prosecution of children in Zambia.

Knowledge Hub

The Knowledge Hub is the area of the Programme that was least impacted by the pandemic, as it swiftly moved all its workshops online. In addition to "Doing Pro Bono the International Development Way", the Programme team also successfully delivered one new workshop on '[Risk Management in Rule of Law Projects](#)' and the second iteration of '[Monitoring and Evaluation Methods for Trainings](#)'. These workshops were created in response to needs identified by our partners.

The Programme team has also recently launched three new papers:

- [Peer-to-Peer in Action: Reflections on Remote Working](#), informed by the feedback collected from the previous Strategic Forum meeting in August 2020.
- [Peer-to-Peer in Action: A Case Study of iProbono and LAPSOJ](#), which explores the partnership between iProbono and the Law and Policy Forum for Social Justice (LAPSOJ) to promote economic, social and cultural rights in Nepal.
- [Improving the Rule of Law: A Guide to Risk Management](#), this paper explores the way in which risk is understood and assessed in international development projects, and seeks to equip legal pro bono providers with tips and tools to strategically mitigate risk and help improve the sustainability of their work.

The Programme also has four new papers in the pipeline, including a *Guide to Equality Mainstreaming* and an *M&E Methods for Trainings Toolbox*

Coordination Facility

The Programme's Coordination Facility has continued to provide opportunities for members across communities of practice to engage in forums and knowledge-sharing events. In the last 6 months, the team delivered 2 events that reached over 220 people from over 140 distinct organisations. These included:

- A virtual event on 16 September, in partnership with the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and the University of Edinburgh, on the '[Rule of Law in Times of Health Crises: Protecting Rights and Saving Lives](#)'. The event focused on the various impacts that emergency measures have had upon the human rights and the rule of law around the world. Based on the findings of our recent research paper, [The Rule of Law in Times of Health Crises](#), the event offered lessons on how the global legal community can support the rule of law during the pandemic.
- On 3 November, during National Pro Bono Week, the Programme convened its flagship 'Celebration of International Pro Bono' event virtually for the first time.

Events in the pipeline include:

- Between 25-26 June 2021, A4ID will host its first virtual Annual Conference on 'Pro Bono for the Rule of Law'. More information will be shared closer to the event.

Communications

By going 100% virtual, the Programme has significantly widened its reach. In the last six months, 300 people attended our online events, there were 1,838 downloads of Programme resources and over 4000 people visited the ROLE UK Programme's website. 50% of the websites' visitors are from the UK and the remaining 50% accessed the website from outside the UK.

REFLECTIONS ON THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROLE UK PROGRAMME

In breakout rooms, participants discussed two main topics. First, exploring how members are preparing for their pro bono work in 2021 amidst continued restrictions caused by the pandemic. Second, how can the Programme strategically adapt its existing support to fulfil the needs of pro bono partnership stakeholders?

Reflections from stakeholders in relation to their own work included:

- By moving online, legal pro bono technical assistance is now able to reach geographical areas and audiences that it would not otherwise have reached.
- Stakeholders are currently scoping for the best technological solutions to allow for legal pro bono technical assistance to be optimised online, particularly in jurisdictions with limited access to internet. Stakeholders are also working to facilitate technical support both for the providers and receivers of training sessions.

- Organisations are working to mitigate the risk of duplication that comes with having a multitude of online trainings. Stakeholders expressed concern that ease of access can diminish the sophistication of webinars.
- Stakeholders are using the time that they are unable to travel to organise future in-country projects.

Reflections on the strategic development of the ROLE UK Programme included:

- How the Programme can take a strategic approach to remain effective and relevant to its in-country partners, as well as upwards to the newly formed FCDO.
- A focus on longer-term strategic goals, alongside individual partnerships and projects.
- How to best combine remote and in-person work when international travel is possible again, with a focus on balancing the ability to reach new audiences remotely and the need to form strong partnerships in-person.
- Facilitating and sharing a list of current partnerships and activities to reduce duplication of work, improve scope for strategic collaboration and cooperation amongst actors.
- Stakeholders expressed interest in the Programme continuing to share examples of best practice from its partnerships with the community of practice.

The next Strategic Forum will be convened in six months' time. Further information about the meeting will be disclosed ahead of time. If you would like to share your work and connect with our Communications team, please feel free to get in touch with A4ID's Communications Lead at Chetasi.Kane@a4id.org. In the meantime, to remain informed of programme news, subscribe to our newsletter, attend [our workshops and events](#) and engage with us on social media [@A4ID](#).

We look forward to your continued support of the ROLE UK Programme.