

# PRODUCTIVE PRO BONO MODELS AND PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR REFORM\*

By

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## Abstract

*Access to justice continues to pose a significant challenge worldwide, especially for indigent people and marginalized communities. Pro bono legal services, which entail lawyers offering free or low-cost assistance, serve as a fundamental element of access to justice, bridging the divide between those who can afford legal representation and those who cannot. This paper explores effective pro bono models from a global viewpoint, emphasizing their frameworks, achievements, and adaptability. Utilizing case studies from Ukraine, Kenya, Rwanda, Kuwait, Malawi, and other nations, it highlights essential components such as mandatory commitments, community-based paralegals, and public-private partnerships. The discussion then shifts to Nigeria, where pro bono initiatives led by the Nigerian Bar Association, The Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee, NGOs, and university Law Clinics have achieved notable success but encounter recognized challenges like; lawyer apathy towards pro bono work, ethical dilemmas in the profession, biases in legal practice, structural obstacles, limited resources, and inconsistent engagement. Proposed practical reforms include the mandatory assignment of Pro Bono Matters (both Civil and Criminal), legislative drafting interventions for pro bono, an automated system from the NBA National Pro-Bono Centre that connects pro bono opportunities with law firms and lawyers, fostering a public interest ethos beyond the official legal aid framework, expanding duty solicitor schemes, and creating a National Pro Bono Hall of Fame. These proposed solutions aim to improve access to justice, alleviate prison overcrowding, and cultivate a culture of professional accountability. The paper concludes with test situations for practical pro bono solutions.*

**Keywords:** Pro bono, Legal Aid, Access to Justice, Professional Ethics, Reform

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## Introduction

Richard Templar's Rule 107 is "Capitalize on the career enhancing moments"<sup>1</sup>

The term "pro bono" comes from the Latin phrase "pro bono publico", which means "for the public good."<sup>2</sup> The American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service explains that; "When society confers the privilege to practice law on an individual, he or she accepts the responsibility to promote justice and to make justice equally accessible to all people. Thus, all lawyers should aspire to render some legal services without fee or expectation of fee for the good of the public."<sup>3</sup>

The Nigerian Bar Association in the NBA pro bono declaration stated; "For purposes of this declaration, pro bono legal services are those provided without a fee or expectation of a fee, principally to benefit poor or underprivileged persons or communities or the organizations that assist them"<sup>4</sup>

In numerous African legal systems, the entitlement to legal representation—established in documents such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights<sup>5</sup> and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>6</sup>—is downgraded by systemic obstacles including poverty, delays in the judicial process, and a lack of resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Templar, Richard. *The rules of work: A definitive code for personal success*. Pearson UK, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Williams University School of Law, *The History of Lawyer Pro Bono Services* <<https://law.rwu.edu/library/blog/history-lawyer-pro-bono-services>> accessed 28 October 2025

<sup>3</sup> <[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal\\_education/resources/pro\\_bono/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pro_bono/)> accessed 26 October 2025

<sup>4</sup> The Nigerian Bar Association Pro Bono Declaration and Establishment of NBA National Pro Bono Centre <<https://www.smartstarr.com.ng/site-jobs/nba-benin/PRO%20BONO%20DECLARATION%20FOR%20MEMBERS%20OF%20THE%20NIGERIAN%20BAR%20%20%20ASSOCIATION.pdf>> accessed 27 October 2025

<sup>5</sup> <<https://achpr.au.int/en/charter/african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights/>> accessed 27 October 2025

<sup>6</sup> Adopted 16 December 1966 <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>> accessed 27 October 2025

Pro bono services, which have historically been regarded as a moral obligation of the legal profession, have transformed into organized frameworks that enhance state legal aid systems. These frameworks not only offer immediate assistance but also encourage wider reforms, including alternatives to formal court proceedings and community-based mediation.<sup>7</sup>

Africa's varied legal frameworks—spanning from common law hybrids in West and Southern Africa to civil law influences in North Africa—present a rich array of pro bono innovations. Nonetheless, the implementation of these initiatives differs significantly, with notable successes in South Africa juxtaposed against the emerging efforts in Nigeria.<sup>8</sup> This paper initially examines effective pro bono models throughout Africa, highlighting scalable strategies. Subsequently, it analyzes the challenges faced by Nigeria and suggests practical, context-sensitive reforms. By merging comparative analysis with policy recommendations, this study enhances the conversation surrounding sustainable access to justice.

## **1.0 Productive Pro Bono Models: Global Perspective**

In Australia, cases involving disadvantaged individuals or non-profit organizations are directed to private attorneys via pro bono referral organizations. Attorneys frequently donate their time at legal clinics, which are often situated in outreach venues such as hospitals or community centers. Furthermore, pro bono attorneys apply their expertise to advocate for legal reforms or improvements in its administration by supporting organizations with submissions, strategic litigation, and campaigns.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ahmad, Jawad, and Georg Von Wangenheim. "Access to justice: An evaluation of the informal justice systems." *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 5.1 (2021): 228-244.

<sup>8</sup> Cummings, Scott L., Fabio de Sa e Silva, and Louise G. Trubek, eds. *Global Pro Bono*. Cambridge University Press, 2022.

<sup>9</sup>Goncearenco, Ludmila. "Legal aid delivery: technology, pro bono services, and collaborative funding models." *Development Through Research and Innovation* (2023): 8-20.

The main providers of pro bono legal services in Kuwait are private law firms. Many of Kuwait's law firms provide legal advice on a pro bono basis. The Kuwait Humanitarian Centre founded by Mishari Al Ghazali provides pro bono legal services for the underprivileged. In criminal proceedings, Article 120 of Law No. 17/1960 promulgating procedures in criminal proceedings, provides that in cases of felonies, there is an obligation on the court to appoint a pro bono lawyer to defend the defendant. There is no reciprocal regime for civil proceedings.<sup>10</sup>

In Ukraine, lawyers from partner law firms analyzed war crimes verdicts to support domestic prosecution efforts and judicial training following the escalation of armed conflict in 2022.<sup>11</sup>

African pro bono models often blend state-funded legal aid with voluntary private sector contributions, leveraging paralegals, university clinics, and NGOs to address high caseloads and rural-urban divides. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Handbook on Improving Access to Legal Aid in Africa identifies four core pillars: community-based mediation, police station interventions, court-level support, and incarceration aid. These are adaptable to local contexts, prioritizing low-cost, high-impact interventions.<sup>12</sup>

## **1.1 Community-Based and Mediation Models**

Community-driven approaches empower non-lawyers to handle minor disputes, reducing court burdens by up to 40-50% in pilot programs. In Rwanda, the Abunzi Committees—elected volunteer panels of 12 members per sector—mediate civil and minor criminal matters under the 2009 Justice, Reconciliation, Law and Order Strategy. Agreements are binding unless appealed

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<sup>10</sup> Sidi, Mohamed Khalifa, and Mansha Rafiq. "The Efficiency of Waqf practice in human resource development: Evidence from different countries." *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Governance* 4.1 (2023): 80-105.

<sup>11</sup> Kalinichenko, Anna, Jasmine Simperingham, and Philip Worthington. "Pro bono collaboration within the legal community's response to displacement from Ukraine." *Forced Migration Review* 72 (2023).

<sup>12</sup> Rosenbaum, Stephen A., et al. "Clinical legal education in Africa." *Global Clinical Legal Education*. Routledge, 2024. 85-105.

within 30 days, fostering reconciliation in post-genocide settings.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Malawi's Village Mediation Programme, piloted by the Paralegal Advisory Service Institute (PASI), trains groups of five literate volunteers to resolve family and economic disputes using a 10-step process, with referrals to formal systems for complex cases. This model, inspired by Bangladesh, has diverted thousands of cases, achieving resolution rates comparable to professional mediators.<sup>14</sup>

## **1.2 State-Supported and Mandatory Pro Bono Framework**

The Rwanda Bar Association collaborates with the Ministry of Justice to provide free legal representation to juvenile offenders across the country. For cases in the Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court, the pro bono programme is also applied and there is a specific number of lawyers designated to the two courts. It is statutorily mandated in Rwanda that no one be tried in the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court without legal representation. Pro bono layers in Rwanda represent high-profile cases, including some related to terrorism. There is a toll-free legal aid line for assisted legal services.<sup>15</sup>

In East Africa, both Kenya and Uganda utilize paralegal rosters to facilitate police diversions, with Kenya's court users' committees advocating for non-custodial sentencing (86% of bail applications are granted, although affordability continues to pose a challenge). Ghana's legal aid board partners with non-governmental organizations to implement comparable initiatives, whereas Egypt's approach is less structured, depending on bar association committees and NGOs such as Andersen

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<sup>13</sup> Tangwe, Abraham Tamukum, Gloire Sebuyange Victoire, and Patrick Kofi Benyin. "The relevance of home-grown solutions: A comparative analogy of Gacaca and Abunzi mediation in Rwanda." *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 10.10 (2023): 180-195.

<sup>14</sup> Chithope-Mwale, Chimwemwe. *Expanding indigent people's right of access to justice and fair trial through a limited right of legal representation by paralegals in Malawi*. MS thesis. University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023.

<sup>15</sup> John, Gasasira Gasana, et al. "Resolving Interpersonal Conflicts in Rwanda: The Contribution of Access to Justice Bureaus." *African Journal of Democracy and Governance* 8.12 (2021): 129-151.

Egypt to provide guidance to non-profits. These efforts prioritize transactional support rather than litigation, focusing on family and administrative requirements.<sup>16</sup>

In Tanzania, attorneys providing pro bono services assisted in the design and implementation of trial advocacy training aimed at prosecutors dealing with cases of human trafficking and wildlife crimes. In Liberia, Nepal, and Belize, partners from law firms engaged in legal research and legislative drafting to facilitate reforms concerning child labor and trafficking. In Kenya, legal teams played a crucial role in establishing a national Prosecution Training Institute, creating case management tools, and offering practical courtroom training for both prosecutors and judges.<sup>17</sup>

## **2.0 Pedestals of pro bono models in Nigeria**

- Direct representation in court for criminal defense or civil claims.
- Legal clinics offering free consultations and advice.
- Support for NGOs through legal drafting, advocacy, and litigation.
- Community outreach and legal education programs.

Pro bono lawyers in Nigeria play a crucial role in advancing many admirable initiatives. Through dedication of time and expertise, they provide essential assistance to marginalized communities and individuals facing legal challenges. This may include representing low-income clients in court or providing legal advice and document preparation; pro bono enthusiasts serve as champions of justice, advocating for the rights of those who are underrepresented. The Nigerian Bar Association Institute of Continuing Legal Education (NBA-ICLE) with the introduction of the Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (MCPD) Rules 2025 requiring all legal practitioners in

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<sup>16</sup> Chithope-Mwale, Chimwemwe. *Expanding indigent people's right of access to justice and fair trial through a limited right of legal representation by paralegals in Malawi*. MS thesis. University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Mkami, Baraka. *Access to Criminal Justice and Laws Governing Powers of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Tanzania: Lessons from India and the United Kingdom*. Diss. University of Dodoma (Tanzania), 2021.

Nigeria to earn a minimum of five CPD credit hours annually positions the practice of law in Nigeria at an exceptionally amazing pedestal.<sup>18</sup>

Knowing that only persons who earn the minimum of 5 CPD points and pay their practicing fee as at when due will be issued the digitalized annual practice license and have their name published on the annual practicing list<sup>19</sup> puts lawyers on a perfect pedestal of consistent improvement.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.1 Professional Ethics and Pro Bono Models

Hon. Justice Habeeb Adewale Olumuyiwa Abiru, J.S.C recently reiterated that “A counsel has a duty, once he accepts a brief, to put his client’s case forward in the best possible manner, with a proper understanding of the relevant legal principles...”<sup>21</sup>

My Lord had to scold a lawyer in that case in the following words; “the arguments contained in the brief of arguments of counsel to the respondent were lame, lazy, lacking in energy, scanty and bereft of any in-depth study and/or analysis of the facts and applicable law to the subject matter...The respondent’s brief of arguments was an exhibition of unseriousness and of a lackadaisical attitude on the part of counsel...”<sup>22</sup>

Pro bono cases hold significant importance and must not be approached with indifference or negligence. Once the decision is made to take on a matter pro bono, it is essential to commit fully to the task, regardless of how challenging the circumstances may be.

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<sup>18</sup><https://blog.nigerianbar.org.ng/2025/03/15/nigerian-bar-association-introduces-mandatory-continuing-professional-development-rules/> accessed 28 October 2025

<sup>19</sup> Ifeoma Peters, *NBA President Osigwe Introduces Mandatory CPD Rules, Digitalized Practice Licenses for 2025* <https://dnlegalandstyle.com/dnl/nba-president-osigwe-introduces-mandatory-cpd-rules-digitalized-practice-licenses-for-2025/> accessed 29 October 2025

<sup>20</sup><https://www.lawyerd.org/news/nbas-new-mcpd-rules-what-every-nigerian-lawyer-needs-to-know-now/> accessed 28 October 2025

<sup>21</sup> Hon. Justice Habeeb Adewale Olumuyiwa Abiru, J.S.C in *Ibrahim Umar V. The State* [2025] 7 NWLR Pt.1990 P. 545-546 Paras. G-C

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Pro-Bono Declaration 2015 and the Establishment of the NBA National Pro-Bono Centre remains core development in the right direction. The NBA Pro-Bono Declaration reads “All members of the NBA have a responsibility to provide pro bono Legal Services. This responsibility stems from the Profession’s role and purpose in society, and from its implicit commitment to a fair and equitable legal system.”<sup>23</sup>

“Pro bono legal services should be provided with the same quality of representation as services provided to paying clients and in a manner upholding the applicable ethical norms and standards”<sup>24</sup>

Legal practitioners play a critical role in safeguarding the rights of individuals and the general public. The Rules of Professional Conduct mandate competence, diligence, and communication, which extend to representing incarcerated clients. In police custody, lawyers must ensure prompt access to counsel to prevent coerced confessions or mistreatment, aligning with ethical obligations.<sup>25</sup>

The Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners<sup>26</sup> also points to the importance of pro bono to the development of law and justice.

Rule 14(1) “A lawyer shall devote his attention, energy and expertise to the service of his client and, subject to any rule of law, act in a manner consistent with the best interest of his client”<sup>27</sup>

Rule 15(1)” In his representation of a client, a lawyer may refuse to aid or participate in conduct that he believes to be unlawful even though there is some support for an argument that the conduct is legal.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> (n 4)

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> <<https://legalpediaonline.com/access-to-justice-in-nigerian-criminal-and-civil-justice-systems/>> accessed 26 September 2025

<sup>26</sup> 2023

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

Rule 30 “A lawyer is an officer of the court and, accordingly, he shall not do any act or conduct himself in any manner that may obstruct, delay or adversely affect the administration of justice.”<sup>29</sup>

Rule 38 “A lawyer assigned to defend an indigent accused shall not ask to be excused except for substantial reason, but shall exert his best effort in the defense of the accused.”<sup>30</sup>

According to Rule 52 (2)<sup>31</sup> A reduced fee or no fee may be charged on ground of the special relationship or indigence of a client, in strict compliance with the Legal Practitioners Remuneration Order. By utilizing their expertise and resources, pro bono attorneys play a vital role in fostering a more just legal environment, where access to justice is not dependent on an individual's financial capacity. The RPC underscores that the practice of law encompasses not only commercial interests but also serves as a public service. Pro bono efforts are positioned as an integral aspect of a lawyer's ethical obligation to advance justice and equity. Attorneys providing pro bono assistance are prohibited from requesting or accepting payment from the client, although they are permitted to reclaim reasonable out-of-pocket costs.

### **3.0 Pro Bono as a Catalyst for Restorative Justice**

The global direction of Criminal Justice increasingly leans towards restorative justice rather than punitive justice. The course of international criminal justice is continually transforming from a strictly punitive model to one that incorporates restorative approaches, with the goal of addressing the limitations of traditional methods that often overlook the requirements of victims, offenders, and communities.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

<sup>32</sup> Procter-Legg, Thomas, Jonathan Hobson, and Ernest Quimby. "Restorative justice and social justice: an international perspective." *Contemporary Justice Review* 27.2-3 (2024): 218-238.

This transition towards a "restorative turn" acknowledges that complex harms require remedies that extend beyond simple punishment. It emphasizes the significance of healing, engaging victims, fostering reconciliation, and facilitating reintegration by involving all parties in the effort to repair societal connections and address the "justice needs" of those impacted by conflict and violence.<sup>33</sup> Individuals in police custody retain essential rights, which include the right to be informed of the reasons for their arrest, the right to remain silent, and the right to legal representation.<sup>34</sup>, and the right to be presented before a court within 24 hours. Suspects should not be subjected to torture or inhumane treatment and are considered innocent until proven guilty. It is the duty of law enforcement officials to convey these rights to suspects in a language that they understand.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.1 Pro bono Models by the United Nations Nelson Mandela Rules**

The United Nations has set a benchmark for the healthcare of prisoners, outlined in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, often known as the Nelson Mandela Rules.<sup>36</sup> The Mandela Rules offer extensive guidance regarding the management of prisons, emphasizing dignity, health, the separation of detainees, and rehabilitation.<sup>37</sup>

In accordance with these regulations, inmates are entitled to receive healthcare that is equivalent in quality to that provided to the general population, at no charge and without any form of discrimination. It is essential that correctional facilities uphold a specialized healthcare service

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<sup>33</sup> Walgrave, Lode. "Restorative justice, punishment, and the law." The Palgrave handbook on the philosophy of punishment. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023. 613-637.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, Section 35(2)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.org/ng/how-monitor-treatment-suspects-police-stations> accessed 19 September, 2025

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Nelson\\_Mandela\\_Rules-E-ebook.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Nelson_Mandela_Rules-E-ebook.pdf) Accessed 17 September 2025

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, Rules 1-9

staffed by a multidisciplinary team, ensure continuity of treatment, and provide necessary psychiatric services.

In Nigeria, the Health and Welfare Directorate of the Nigeria Correctional Service consists of several units tasked with ensuring the physical, psychological, and developmental health of both inmates and staff. The Directorate is in charge of managing correctional clinics and hospitals. With a dedicated team of Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, and Paramedics, it ensures the ongoing delivery of medical services to inmates in all Custodial Centres throughout the country. Furthermore, the Directorate is accountable for upholding a suitable environment within the custodial centres via its Environmental Health section.<sup>38</sup> Pro bono pedestals in this regard needs more focus and attention so that the ‘powers that be’ consistently comply with activated reforms.

### **3.2 Legislative Drafting Pro bono models in Nigeria**

The Exclusive legislative list is detailed in Part 1 of the Second Schedule of the 1999 Constitution, specifying items that solely the National Assembly is authorized to legislate on. In contrast, the Concurrent legislative list found in Part 2 of the same Schedule includes items that both the Federal and State governments are permitted to legislate on, as stipulated.<sup>39</sup>

The Fifth Alteration (No.15) Act, which alters the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to remove the term "prisons" from the Exclusive Legislative List and to reclassify it as "Correctional Services" within the Concurrent Legislative List, represents a significant advancement. This legislative change eliminates item 48, "Prisons," from the Exclusive list by adding a new paragraph 10A subsequent to the current paragraph 10, which is titled "Correctional Services" in the Concurrent list. It grants the National Assembly (NASS) and State Assemblies the

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<sup>38</sup> [https://www.corrections.gov.ng/page/directorate/health-&-welfare?menu\\_id=3&sub\\_id=10](https://www.corrections.gov.ng/page/directorate/health-&-welfare?menu_id=3&sub_id=10) accessed 20 September 2025

<sup>39</sup> The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as altered)

authority to enact laws that establish correctional services and custodial facilities, along with the governing bodies responsible for their management.<sup>40</sup>

Activated pro bono models identifiable here include campaigns for states correctional facilities and custodial centers with interventions drafting of Bills, proposals and push for relevant Laws particularly at the state level. Proposed pro bono reforms can be implemented through awareness campaigns and mobilization efforts aimed at prompting active involvement from state governments. Additionally, decongestion initiatives should be actively promoted and emphasized by the Attorney General and Chief Judges of the states to ensure that platforms are effectively used for electronic bail reviews and virtual hearings, thereby mitigating the high incidence of injustice resulting from inadequate access to the ‘wheels of justice’.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4.0 Pro Bono models in Civil Litigation

This study is especially focused on dispelling the prevalent misconception that pro bono services are exclusively necessary for criminal cases or that only criminal suspects or defendants are in need of assistance. This is not the case. A significant number of criminal activities can be accurately linked to underlying issues, such as protracted civil cases involving immigration, land disputes, matrimonial causes, political indifference, governmental neglect, and concerns related to community or environmental matters.

Consider matrimonial causes as an example; the majority of offenders often stem from problematic upbringings and dysfunctional family structures. Juvenile delinquency frequently becomes unavoidable for many adolescents, even those raised in the most favorable environments.

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<sup>40</sup> Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), Constitution Amendment Directs Devolution of Powers on Prisons, Railways & Electricity to the States, *FactSheet, Issue 2, March 2023*. Available online: <https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Devolution-of-powers.pdf> accessed 27 October 2025

<sup>41</sup> Umukoro, Brown E., and Ejiro Tessy Kore-Okiti. "Legal Imperatives for Decongesting Correctional Centres in Nigeria: A Review of Recent Legislative Measures." *Beijing L. Rev.* 14 (2023): 233.

However, with appropriate guidance and training, these young individuals are less likely to adopt criminal behavior as a norm.<sup>42</sup>

A lot of Legal Practitioners in Nigeria, by way of principle or belief never take divorce cases, they refuse to handle them altogether. The first misconception that needs addressing pertains to classification. Matrimonial causes do not always culminate in the dissolution of marriage; moreover, even when such an outcome is necessary, with appropriate legal guidance, the parties involved can achieve amicable settlement agreements that prioritize the welfare of the children, preventing them from becoming societal burdens.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, the adults, who are often left heartbroken and emotionally as well as psychologically traumatized, may subsequently engage in criminal activities.

Section 15(2) of the Federal Capital Territory Customary Court Act<sup>44</sup> provides;

“In civil causes or matters, a customary court may promote reconciliation among the parties thereto and encourage and facilitate amicable settlement thereof”

The Rules of that Court<sup>45</sup> by Order 6 Rule 1 provides “At any stage of the proceedings, where parties to the action consent. The court may make an order referring disputes for settlement out of court” Sub Rule (b) further provides; “The court on receipt of the aforesaid document shall enter a consent judgment”.

A greater number of lawyers ought to engage in civil cases on a pro bono basis. The role of a judge is challenging, as they must act as an impartial arbiter who has either attempted to facilitate or

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<sup>42</sup>Yusuf, Sodiq Adewale, et al. "The role of peer influence on juvenile delinquency among adolescents in the government remand homes, Lagos state Nigeria." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11.11 (2021): 2530-2545.

<sup>43</sup>Adejoh, Samuel Ojima, et al. "Exploration of factors that influence divorce: Voices of divorcees in Lagos, Nigeria." *Social Work & Society* 21.2 (2023).

<sup>44</sup> 2007

<sup>45</sup> The Federal Capital Territory Customary Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2023

actively supported the parties in reaching an amicable settlement. It becomes evident when one litigant, who is perceived as 'the problem,' consistently refuses to make concessions or compromise.

Settlement terms that are mutually agreed upon by the parties, with effective guidance from knowledgeable counsel, tend to have a higher likelihood of lasting compliance. An amicably resolved matrimonial dispute yields multifaceted benefits. Custody rights that are settled amicably, property interests that are resolved through agreement, and psychological as well as emotional distress that is alleviated through mutual understanding all contribute to this.

Additionally, effective pro bono models are reflected in legal services that facilitate the enforcement of court judgments and ensure that such judgments are executed for individuals who are impoverished and vulnerable.

## 5.0 Suggested Practical Solutions for Reforms

Reforms must be built to boost established frameworks such as the NBA's National Pro Bono Centre, the initiatives of the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee (ACJMC), university law clinics, and the collaborative endeavors of partners like the Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC). This underscores the necessity for prioritizing incentives, capacity for growth and monitoring.

Utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve Pro Bono Legal Services is also crucial, as AI possesses significant potential to enhance these services. Lawyers can engage more actively in the development of software and advanced AI models, given their understanding of the unique challenges encountered by relevant sectors.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Rajendran, Rajesh Kanna, S. Vetrivel, and Wilfred Blessing NR. "The role of ai in enhancing access to justice and legal services." *Exploration of AI in Contemporary Legal Systems*. IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2025. 139-162.

Transforming the pro bono services provided by lawyers has the potential to greatly enhance access to justice and reinforce the legal profession's dedication to public service. Additional recommendations include;

1. Enhanced Engagement in Pro Bono Matters (Civil and Criminal): This includes awareness campaigns and the collaboration of law schools and universities, which can stimulate early interest. Recognition and incentives (such as additional CPD points/credits and awards) encourage lawyers to take on more pro bono cases. A balanced focus on both civil and criminal matters ensures that underserved communities receive comprehensive legal support.

2. Automated System for a National Pro Bono Centre featuring a centralized digital platform that can effectively connect lawyers and firms with pro bono opportunities based on their expertise, location, and availability. Real-time case tracking and analytics will assist in identifying gaps and enhancing service delivery, while streamlined coordination will alleviate administrative burdens and boost participation.

3. Expansion of Duty Solicitor Schemes to ensure that the Police Duty Solicitor Scheme (PDSS) and the Court Duty Solicitor Scheme (CDSS) work in synergy with the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria and the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee. Broader coverage in rural and underserved regions is necessary to guarantee immediate legal representation, balancing both criminal and civil cases.

4. Creation of a National Pro Bono Hall of Fame to honor exceptional contributions and inspire others to emulate such efforts. The Hall of Fame will also enhance the visibility of pro bono work within the legal community and among the public. This initiative will foster institutional commitment from law firms and legal organizations.

Collectively, these reforms can establish a more inclusive, responsive, and effective pro bono ecosystem. A unique Professional Rank/Title to be known as ‘Distinguished Pro Bono Advocate’ to be conferred on deserving Legal Practitioners.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

The principles of professional ethics are crucial to all aspects of law and the legal profession. Ethical standards serve as the foundation for any successful pro bono initiative. They guarantee that reform efforts are not merely well-meaning but also efficient, fair, and sustainable.

This study explored pro bono models worldwide and proposed necessary reforms, particularly in areas that are often overlooked, especially considering the inherently unique characteristics and the intersection of civil and criminal law, professional ethics, and legal and legislative drafting.

## **7.0 Pro Bono Dimensions / Test Situations**

1. Local Community has an illegal gold mining hotspot close to the chief’s palace; bandits have forcefully taken charge of the area imposing chieftaincy titles on themselves and mandating farmers to pay customary tenancy fines/taxes.
2. A state legislation established a Corporate Social Responsibility Enforcement Commission. Section 12 of the law reads “The CSREC shall impose fines and sanctions on defaulting corporations within the state, who submit to its authority”
3. Matrimonial cause of drug addict/alcoholic father with three daughters, rapes one, consistently attempts to rape another is eventually arrested and charged to court for armed robbery, assault, criminal trespass, trial pending, bail denied, wife seeks divorce and custody of children.

4. Mother with son from another man, 16-year-old, son rapes 13 years old half sister in new marriage, girl pregnant, Father breaks boy's left arm and right eye. Guess what he was in court for-divorce to protect his family name and send woman & boy away.
5. Man is a Serving Lance Corporal with the Nigerian Army, handles guns and other military hardware, wife a tik-tok influencer and content creator using underage female children for content, sexualizing with local and international soliciting by perverts of different sexual orientations.