

The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice

Highlights 2008

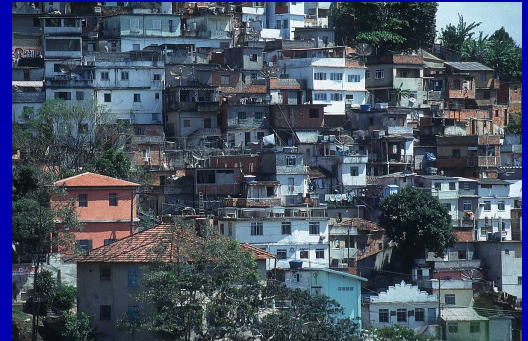
Pro Bono: Stronger than Ever

Throughout the Americas, poor and marginalized communities are unable to access the legal system to exercise their rights. For the past seven years, the Vance Center has worked with partners from throughout the region to promote access to justice initiatives in the hemisphere to address this need. Working with public and private sector lawyers, bar associations, law schools and NGOs, a robust pro bono culture is developing.

These efforts bore fruit in early 2008, when lawyers from across North and South America launched the Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas (PBDA), the first hemispheric statement of a lawyer's professional responsibility to provide pro bono legal assistance. To date, more than 400 lawyers, legal institutions and NGOs have signed the Declaration, which commits lawyers to doing at least 20 hours of pro bono work a year.

The Vance Center is working to build and strengthen the structures that will enable signatories to fulfill their commitment under the PBDA. The Vance Center organized roundtables in Peru in June and Argentina in October for PBDA signatories to discuss strategies for developing institutional pro bono programs and improving pro bono referral networks between NGOs and law school clinics and lawyers seeking to provide pro bono legal services. Over 70 lawyers at firms from throughout the region that signed the Declaration met in Buenos Aires to showcase pro bono projects, including impact litigation, transactional work and direct legal assistance to individuals.

"In Peru, the Declaration was the spark that lit the fire for pro bono work to be embraced truly as a collective endeavor," said Enrique Felices of Miranda & Amado, a PBDA signatory in Peru.



Conserving the Environment

Responding to the growing international focus on climate change and environmental sustainability, the Vance Center is coordinating a project on behalf of the Rainforest Alliance. A team of U.S. and Latin



American lawyers identified through the Vance Center's Global Pro Bono Clearinghouse is researching laws and regulations in various Latin American jurisdictions that encourage small and medium-sized businesses to adopt the Rainforest Alliance's sustainability practices. They will prepare a report that will identify best practices and lessons learned and serve as a resource for stakeholders throughout Latin America.

Achieving the Commitment

In 2009, the Vance Center will publish the following pro bono resources:

Spotlight on Pro Bono will feature profiles of pro bono projects in Latin America. Its release will coincide with the first anniversary of the signing of the PBDA, and will serve as a resource for signatories to develop projects and partnerships to meet their commitments under the Declaration by 2010.

Pro Bono at Law Firms: A Manual for Implementation is the first Spanish language guide for best practices in law firm pro bono programs. It compiles examples and recommendations for establishing and administering pro bono programs at law firms, including guidance on program structures, policies and administrative procedures. It will be published in Spanish and Portuguese.

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VANCE CENTER

Partnerships between Africa and Latin America



The Vance Center is working to create a network of human rights advocates in Africa and Latin America, which both have histories of severe human rights violations. With the recent establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, a region-wide human rights court that is comparable to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights, the two regions now also have in place similar systems for promoting and protecting human rights.

In the Spring of 2008, the Center helped organize a roundtable in Arusha, Tanzania, at which African and Latin American human rights practitioners shared ideas and strategies for making their respective human rights systems more effective and accessible. In October, the Center organized a follow-up meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, at which human rights advocates from the two regions discussed various concrete ways — for example, sharing information and ideas online and in journals, drafting amicus briefs for cases in the other region, and arranging judicial exchanges and joint training sessions — in which they could continue to collaborate. Over the next several months, the Vance Center will work with its partners in Africa and Latin America to implement some of the proposals.

Amicus Network Updates

Through its Amicus Network, the Vance Center creates opportunities for U.S. lawyers to participate in cutting-edge public interest matters in Latin America and Africa.

In March, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights approved a settlement between Chile and Marcela Valdés that implemented recommendations in an amicus brief filed by Legal Momentum. The brief argued that Ms. Valdés' termination from the Chilean police force violated international laws and norms governing gender discrimination and an employer's obligation to assist rather than punish victims of domestic violence. Chile will offer financial compensation to Ms. Valdés and strengthen the laws and regulations concerning domestic violence and sexual harassment within the police and armed forces.

Claude v. Chile involved an issue of access to public information. The brief, filed with the Inter-American Commission by the Open Society Institute, Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad de Peru and Libertad de Información Mexico, affirmed the right of public access to state information on national resources. Under the terms of the settlement, the Chilean government passed the Transparency and Access to Public Information Law, which created a Transparency Council to begin operations in April 2009.

South African Visiting Lawyer Program

In November 2007, two alumni of the Vance Center's Visiting Lawyer Program, Lerato Mathopo and Vele Mulangaphuma, formed DM5, a South African law



firm specializing in commercial and finance law. All five partners of the firm are black women with substantial experience working on major commercial transactions at law firms and financial institutions.

Both Ms. Mathopo and Ms. Mulangaphuma participated in the Visiting Lawyer Program in 2002-03. Ms. Mathopo completed her fellowship at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett and JP Morgan Chase and Ms. Mulangaphuma at Weil, Gotshal & Manges.

The Vance Center is welcoming four fellows for the 2008-09 program: Siviwe Anthony at Kirkland & Ellis, Tholinhlanhla Gcabashe at Sullivan & Cromwell, Michael Gwala at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom and Lindiwe Vundla at Weil, Gotshal & Manges.