

# Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

## Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Rwanda

### Introduction

Rwanda is a rapidly developing nation in East Africa and has made significant strides in rebuilding its legal and social systems following the 1994 genocide. Despite impressive economic growth and efforts to reduce poverty, the country still faces challenges related to economic inequality and access to justice. The Rwandan Constitution emphasizes the right to legal assistance, and the government, along with the Rwanda Bar Association, actively promotes access to justice initiatives. While the tradition of pro bono legal services in Rwanda is still evolving, there is a growing recognition of its importance in bridging the justice gap for vulnerable and marginalised populations. The legal community, including both individual practitioners and law firms, is increasingly engaging in pro bono work, supported by policies that encourage lawyers to contribute their expertise to those in need. As Rwanda continues to develop its legal infrastructure, the provision of pro bono services is expected to expand, further enhancing access to justice across the country.

### At a glance

Minimum pro bono hours requirement for lawyers?	Specific pro bono licence required?	May foreign lawyers practice pro bono?	Insurance required for law firm pro bono?	Insurance required for in-house pro bono?	Rules to limit advertising pro bono work?	Does pro bono work count to CLE credit?	Limitations for in-house lawyers to do pro bono?
No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

### The landscape

Professional regulation	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of legal services, including any licensing required to provide legal services. Please highlight any differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel.</li> </ol>	<p>Law No. 83/2013 of 11/09/2013<sup>1</sup> and the RBA Internal Rules and regulate the provision of legal services in Rwanda. They outline the requirements for admission to the bar in Rwanda, the rights and duties of advocates, and the disciplinary measures applicable to members of the Rwanda Bar Association. They serve as a foundational legal framework for regulating the provision of legal services.</p> <p><i>Licensing and Admission to the Bar:</i> To practice law in Rwanda, individuals must be admitted to the Rwanda Bar Association (“<b>RBA</b>”). In order to</p>

<sup>1</sup>Law No. 83/2013 of 11/09/2013 establishing the Bar Association in Rwanda and determining its organization and functioning

	<p>be admitted to the Bar, one must obtain a law degree from a recognized institution, complete a professional legal training course, and pass the Bar examination. Once a person passes the Bar examination, they are not immediately admitted to the roll of advocates. They are admitted to the roll of intern advocates for a one-year period, after which they take one final exam, and upon passing that exam, they are then admitted to the roll of senior advocates.</p> <p><i>In-House Counsel:</i> Lawyers working as in-house counsel in Rwanda are not required to be members of the Rwanda Bar Association. Practising lawyers who decide to work as In-House Counsel are required to suspend their practicing license for the duration they are working as In-House-Counsel.</p>
<b>Regulatory landscape for pro bono</b>	
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>The provision of pro bono legal services is regulated by the RBA Internal Rules and Regulations. Any Advocate registered on the roll has the obligation to assist indigent or vulnerable persons on their own initiative or where assigned by the authorities of the Bar.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>The RBA Internal Rules and Regulations do not impose any mandatory or minimum fees on the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>No, lawyers do not need a license to provide pro bono legal services.</p>
<p>4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>No, foreign-qualified lawyers do not need any additional license to provide pro bono services.</p>
<p>5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?</p>	<p>There is no minimum pro bono hours requirement for lawyers in Rwanda. However, in practice, lawyers admitted to the Bar on the roll of intern advocates are required to provide pro bono services to at least one needy person in the course of their internship.</p>

<sup>2</sup> RBA Internal Rules and regulations, Article 130, no 16

6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	No.
7. Aside from mandatory targets (if any), are there aspirational pro bono hours targets for lawyers set by the local bar association, regulatory body or other body?	No. However, lawyers admitted to the Bar on the roll of intern advocates are required to provide pro bono services to at least one needy person in the course of their internship.
8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	No. CLE requirements are pursued separately from pro bono services.
<b>Insurance and advertising</b>	
9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers?  If insurance is required, can lawyers meet the requirement by working under the cover of another pro bono provider, e.g. in partnership with a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?	Lawyers in Rwanda are required to have professional indemnity insurance as mandated by the RBA to protect against potential claims of negligence or malpractice. This requirement applies to all legal services they provide, including pro bono work. As such, they do not need to use the cover of another pro bono provider.  Note that in-house lawyers employed by a corporation or organization are not generally required to obtain professional indemnity insurance because they do not offer services to external clients and their work is covered under the liability of the employer.
10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	Yes. RBA prohibits the use of all means of advertising, except what is strictly necessary for the information of the public.
<b>Pro bono practice and culture</b>	
11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?	In Rwanda, several areas of law present significant opportunities for pro bono work, primarily driven by the need to enhance access to justice for underserved populations. The main areas and unmet legal needs include:  <i>Access to Justice for Vulnerable Populations:</i> Many individuals, particularly in rural areas, lack access to legal representation due to financial

	<p>constraints.</p> <p><i>Land and Property Rights:</i> Land disputes are common in Rwanda, often due to unclear land titles and inheritance issues.</p> <p><i>Family Law:</i> Issues such as divorce, child custody, and domestic violence require legal intervention. Pro bono work in family law can support individuals, particularly women and children, in securing their rights and accessing necessary legal remedies.</p> <p><i>Human Rights and Social Justice:</i> Pro bono services can play a crucial role in advocating for human rights, addressing issues such as discrimination, gender-based violence, and the rights of marginalized groups.</p> <p><i>Criminal Defense for Indigent Defendants:</i> Many individuals accused of crimes cannot afford legal representation. Pro bono legal assistance is essential in ensuring fair trials and protecting the rights of defendants.</p> <p><i>Legal Education and Awareness:</i> There is a need for increased legal literacy among the general population. Pro bono initiatives can include educational programs to raise awareness about legal rights and processes.</p>
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>In Rwanda, the provision of pro bono legal services is supported by a diverse range of organizations and entities, each playing a crucial role in enhancing access to justice. The main providers include:</p> <p><i>RBA:</i> The RBA is a key player in promoting pro bono work among its members. It encourages lawyers to provide free legal assistance to those in need as part of their professional and ethical responsibilities.<sup>3</sup></p> <p><i>NGOs:</i> Several NGOs in Rwanda focus on legal aid and human rights advocacy. Organizations such as Legal Aid Forum<sup>4</sup>, Certa Foundation</p>

<sup>3</sup> See, the Rwanda Bar Association's website <https://rwandabar.rw/> (last visited on March 9, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> See, the Legal Aid Forum's website in respect of Rwanda <https://www.legalaidrwanda.org/> (last visited on March 9, 2026).

	<p>through its Center for Justice and Advocacy<sup>5</sup> and Rwanda International Bridges to Justice<sup>6</sup> provide legal assistance and support to vulnerable populations, especially women and children.</p> <p><i>Universities and Law Schools:</i> Academic institutions, such as the University of Rwanda, often have legal clinics where law students, under supervision, provide pro bono legal services. These clinics serve as both educational platforms and valuable resources for the community.</p> <p><i>Private Law Firms:</i> Both local and international law firms operating in Rwanda are increasingly engaging in pro bono work. These firms often dedicate resources and expertise to support individuals and organizations that require legal assistance but cannot afford it.</p> <p><i>Corporate Organisations:</i> Some corporate entities, particularly those with a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility, offer pro bono legal services or support initiatives that enhance access to justice.</p> <p>Together, these providers form a network of support that addresses the legal needs of underserved communities in Rwanda, contributing to the broader goal of ensuring justice and equality for all.</p>
<p>13. Are there any noteworthy examples of how innovative technology or artificial intelligence is being used to enable access to pro bono or otherwise as part of pro bono cases or matters?</p>	<p>A notable example is the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (“<b>IECMS</b>”), launched in 2016. This system automates judicial processes and facilitates seamless information sharing among institutions, thereby expediting justice delivery. The IECMS has been instrumental in streamlining case management, making legal procedures more efficient and accessible to all, including those seeking pro bono assistance.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Legal Aid Forum (“<b>LAF</b>”) uses SMS and mobile</p>

<sup>5</sup> See, the Certa Foundation’s Center for Justice and Advocacy’s website <https://www.certafoundation.rw/> (last visited on March 9, 2026).

<sup>6</sup> See, the International Bridges to Justice’s website in respect of Rwanda <https://www.ibj.org/category/programs/rwanda/> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> See, Technology plays a big role in enhancing access to justice [https://www.minijust.gov.rw/news-detail/technology-plays-a-big-role-in-enhancing-access-to-justice?utm\\_source](https://www.minijust.gov.rw/news-detail/technology-plays-a-big-role-in-enhancing-access-to-justice?utm_source) (last visited on September 9, 2025).

	platforms to disseminate legal information and respond to legal aid requests. These tools allow individuals to access pro bono services regardless of their location.
<b>Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts</b>	
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Grassroots Justice Network Better Legal Services Law Firm which is a pro bono unit to help the vulnerable.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>The Rwanda Volunteer Network founded in 2014.<sup>9</sup></p> <p><i>RBA:</i> The RBA is a central body that promotes pro bono work among its members. Lawyers interested in pro bono opportunities can engage with the RBA to learn about initiatives and projects that require legal assistance. The RBA often collaborates with other organizations to enhance access to justice.<sup>10</sup></p> <p><i>LAF:</i> Legal Aid Forum is a prominent organization in Rwanda that coordinates legal aid services and promotes access to justice. It works with a network of legal aid providers, including NGOs and law firms, to facilitate pro bono work. Lawyers can connect with LAF to explore opportunities for involvement in legal aid projects.<sup>11</sup></p> <p><i>International Justice Mission (IJM) Rwanda:</i> IJM is an international organization with a presence in Rwanda, focusing on human rights and legal support for vulnerable populations. They often seek legal professionals to assist with their mission and may offer opportunities for pro bono work.<sup>12</sup></p>

<sup>8</sup> See, Better Legal Services Law Firm <https://grassrootsjusticenetwork.org/connect/organization/better-legal-services-law-firm/> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> See, Global pro bono [https://globalprobono.org/post\\_members/rwanda-volunteer-network/#:~:text=The%20Rwanda%20Volunteer%20Network%20was,connections%20across%20countries%20and%20cultures](https://globalprobono.org/post_members/rwanda-volunteer-network/#:~:text=The%20Rwanda%20Volunteer%20Network%20was,connections%20across%20countries%20and%20cultures). (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> See, the Rwanda Bar Association's website <https://www.rwandabar.org.rw/> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<sup>11</sup> See, the Legal Aid Forum's website in respect of Rwanda <https://www.legalaidrwanda.org/> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.ijm.org/news/why-rwanda-commemorates-july-4-violence-will-not-have-the-last-word> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<p>15. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign lawyer can register to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?</p>	<p><i>Human Rights First Rwanda Association:</i> Human Rights First Rwanda provides legal aid and human rights education programs through a community clinical legal aid project that assists poor and vulnerable persons in rural districts.<sup>13</sup></p> <p><i>RBA:</i> The RBA is a primary body that encourages pro bono work among its members. Lawyers can engage with the RBA to stay informed about initiatives and projects that require legal assistance. The RBA often collaborates with other organizations to promote access to justice.</p> <p><i>LAF:</i> Legal Aid Forum is a significant organization in Rwanda that coordinates legal aid services and promotes access to justice. It works with a network of legal aid providers, including NGOs and law firms, to facilitate pro bono work. Lawyers can connect with LAF to explore opportunities for involvement in legal aid projects.</p> <p><i>International and Local NGOs:</i> Organizations such as International Justice Mission (IJM) Rwanda and other local NGOs often seek legal professionals to assist with their missions. These organizations may offer opportunities for pro bono work and can be a valuable resource for lawyers looking to contribute.</p> <p><i>University Legal Clinics:</i> Law schools such as the University of Rwanda, often have legal clinics that provide pro bono services. These clinics may welcome the involvement of practicing lawyers to support their educational and community service efforts.<sup>14</sup></p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>Rwanda won the Commonwealth Access to Justice Innovation Awards 2024.<sup>15</sup> The first award recognised its Abunzi (Mediators) Committee Project which draws upon traditional methods of conflict resolution to settle disputes at the grassroots level to foster community cohesion. The Ministry of Justice’s integrated electronic</p>

<sup>13</sup> See, HRFR <http://rightsrwanda.com/Mission.html> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<sup>14</sup> See, Legal aid clinic Rwanda <https://www.uu.nl/en/achtergrond/legal-aid-clinic-in-rwanda-the-telephone-helpline-is-a-great-tool> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

<sup>15</sup> See, Kenya and Rwanda win Commonwealth Access to Justice Innovation Awards <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/kenya-and-rwanda-win-commonwealth-access-justice-innovation-awards> (last visited on September 9, 2025).

	<p>case management system received the second award. While these awards were not exclusively pro bono, they recognize initiatives that expand access to justice, which is a core goal of pro bono work.</p> <p>There is the Best International Pro Bono Award at the LawWorks Awards which included awards for initiatives in Rwanda to improve well-being in the poorest communities in Kigali<sup>16</sup>.</p> <p>Duncan Lewis and Baker Mckenzie received a pro bono award in 2024 for their work related to legal challenges regarding the UK and Rwanda asylum plan.<sup>17</sup></p>
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## Acknowledgements

Name of law firm: Equity Juris Chambers – DLA Piper Africa

Name of lawyer: Moses Kiiza

## Learn more

[Navigate the full Global Pro Bono Guide](#) to explore the global landscape and pro bono practices and opportunities across 100+ jurisdictions.

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<sup>16</sup> [Press release: Winners of the LawWorks Pro Bono Awards 2021 | LawWorks](#)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bakermckenzie.com/en/newsroom/2024/06/bm-wins-pro-bono-initiative-of-the-year> (Last viewed on 9 March 2026).