

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Uganda

Introduction

Article 126 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda provides that in adjudicating both civil and criminal cases, the courts shall, subject to the law, administer justice to all irrespective of their social or economic status. Despite this constitutional requirement, there remains gross inaccessibility to justice in Uganda due to a variety of reasons, including poverty, a highly understaffed judiciary, and illiteracy. Pro bono services are, therefore, in great demand in Uganda. There is a relatively large network of pro bono services available across Uganda, with the majority provided by non-governmental organisations. However, these services are not widely available, as most are located in urban areas such as Kampala (due to easy access to utilities, communication services, and the courts), whereas 62.6%¹ of Ugandan citizens live in rural areas. Consequently, there is still an issue with access to justice for the majority of citizens. Pro bono organisations are mainly concentrated in the major cities, and pro bono services are primarily provided by Justice Law and Order Sector institutions (JLOS) and civil society organisations,² which are key to providing pro bono services to the poor and marginalised groups in Uganda. [The Advocates Act \(Cap 295\)](#) (the Advocates Act) is a vital development in improving access to justice for vulnerable citizens in Uganda. The government has endeavoured to address this service gap by adopting the JLOS, which brings together institutions with closely linked goals of administering justice, maintaining law and order, and upholding human rights to develop a common policy framework.³

The overall goal of the JLOS is to promote the rule of law. However, it is still limited in its reach countrywide, leaving interventions by other legal aid service providers, including individual lawyers and corporations critical to facilitate access to pro bono services by indigent persons in Uganda.

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?
Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No

The landscape

¹ See https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/statistics/Rural_Urban_Population_for_the_146_Districts_in_Uganda.xlsx last accessed on 7 January 2025.

² See Anthony Conrad K. Kakooza, Pro Bono Publico and Its Administration in Uganda, ACADEMIA.EDU, available at http://illinois.academia.edu/AnthonyKakooza/Papers/1608827/PRO_BONO_PUBLICO_AND_ITS_ADMINISTRATION_IN_UGANDA (last visited on 7 January 2024).

³ <https://jlos.go.ug/> (last visited on 15 January 2026).

Professional regulation

1. 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.

The Legal profession in Uganda is regulated by the Uganda Law Council (the Law Council), established by Section 2 of the Advocates Act). All Ugandan counsel, whether in-house or in private practice, are regulated by the same regulatory framework and the Law Council.

The Law Council, through the Committee on Legal Education and Training (the Committee), exercises control over and supervises professional legal education in Uganda. The Committee was introduced by the Advocates Act and principally serves as the Law Council's medium for supervising and controlling professional education.

Practicing lawyers in Uganda are referred to as "advocates" once they are entered on Uganda's Roll of Advocates and certified to practise law in Uganda by way of a practising certificate issued on an annual basis by the Chief Registrar of the High Court of Uganda after payment of fees prescribed by the Law Council. A lawyer who is not an advocate cannot appear before any court of law in Uganda.

To become an advocate in Uganda, one must obtain a Bachelor of Laws degree from an approved undergraduate university. Lawyers who wish to become advocates must pass a postgraduate diploma in legal practice (the Bar course) offered by the Law Development Centre in Kampala or obtain a certificate of eligibility from the Law Council based on the grounds that they have qualified in a jurisdiction operating the common law system. A lawyer qualified to practise law in another common law jurisdiction (foreign qualified lawyer) is expected to have completed one year of training under a certified advocate in Uganda before applying to the Law Council for a certificate of eligibility.

If a foreign qualified lawyer seeks to undertake the Bar Course, the Law Council may recommend that they attend core subject classes at a licensed Ugandan university before they can be admitted to the Bar Course. Currently, no bilateral

	<p>treaties exist that permit foreign qualified lawyers to automatically practise in Uganda.</p> <p>In-house legal departments have the option of applying for a certificate of approval of chambers from the Law Council. This would qualify them as premises approved for legal practice. This is crucial, since the Chief Registrar of the High Court of Uganda can refuse to grant or renew an advocate's practising certificate if the advocate is not affiliated with chambers approved by the Law Council, according to Section 17(1)(j) of the Advocates Act. Therefore, it is advisable that in-house legal departments are duly approved as premises for legal practice to facilitate in-house counsel's applications for practicing certificates.</p> <p>All advocates practising in Uganda are required to become members of the Uganda Law Society (ULS), which is established by the Uganda Law Society Act (Cap 305) (the ULSA).</p>
<h3>Regulatory landscape for pro bono</h3>	
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p><u>The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (as amended):</u>⁴ Article 126(2)(a) enjoins courts of law to adjudicate all disputes, both criminal and civil, in a just manner, regardless of their social and economic status.</p> <p>The Advocates Act Cap 295: This Act requires every advocate to provide pro bono services when required by the Law Council and allows the Law Council to refuse to renew the practising certificate of any advocate who fails to comply with their obligation to provide pro bono legal services.</p> <p><u>The Law Development Centre Act Cap 251:</u> This Act provides that the Law Development Centre, a statutory body established to administer the Bar Course for lawyers in Uganda, can assist in providing pro bono legal services to indigent litigants and accused persons.</p> <p><u>The Advocates (Pro Bono Services to Indigent Persons) Regulations SI No. 39 of 2009 (the</u></p>

⁴ See https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/t11679/source_file/b8c16e325107c330/1995-constitution.pdf / (last visited on 7 January 2025).

	<p>Advocates Pro bono Regulations):⁵ These Law Council regulations require every advocate to provide a minimum of 40 hours of pro bono work annually to indigent persons or pay a fee of UGX 400,000 (approximately US\$108) towards the facilitation of the administration of the ULS Pro Bono Scheme.⁶ This is not strictly enforced in practice, and pro bono services remain largely voluntary and linked to corporate social responsibility.</p> <p>The Advocates (Legal Aid to Indigent Persons) Regulations of 2007:⁷ These Regulations apply to all persons, organisations, and institutions providing pro bono legal services, granting the Law general supervisory authority over the provision of legal advice to indigent persons at little or no cost. They also regulate and monitor the quality and efficiency of pro bono legal services through registration and certification of legal aid providers by the Law Council.</p> <p>The Advocates (Student Practice) Regulations, 2004:⁸ Sections 7 and 8 of these Regulations allow lawyers pursuing the Bar Course at the Law Development Centre to offer pro bono legal services under an advocate’s supervision.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>Lawyers do not need a specific licence to provide pro bono legal services if they are duly qualified as advocates as referred in II(a)(1) above. In the case of student lawyers providing pro bono legal services, the services must be provided under an advocate’s supervision.</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>Foreign-qualified lawyers do not require any additional licences to provide pro bono legal services if they are duly qualified as advocates as referred in II(a)(1) above (if they are dispensing pro bono legal advice based on Ugandan law).</p>
<p>5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work</p>	<p>Advocates are required to provide 40 hours of</p>

⁵ See https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/18038/source_file/c917a65e95b51635/uganda-citizenship-and-immigration-control-amendment-act-2009.pdf (last visited on 7 January 2025).

⁶ See <https://uls.or.ug/pro-bono-scheme/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

⁷ See

https://www.ngobureau.go.ug/~ngoburea/sites/default/files/laws_regulations/2020/12/Advocates%20%28Legal%20Aid%20to%20Indigent%20Persons%29%20Regulations%2C%202007.pdf (last visited on 7 January 2025) [Advocates \(Legal Aid to Indigent Persons\) Regulations 2007](#).

⁸ See <https://archive.gazettes.africa/archive/ug/2004/ug-government-gazette-dated-2004-10-29-no-56.pdf> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

<p>a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?</p>	<p>pro bono services annually or make payment in lieu.⁹ The Advocates Pro Bono Regulations specifies the nature of pro bono services and the areas of law in relation to which professional services can be rendered. It empowers the Law Council to establish a pro bono scheme and sets up a board of trustees to manage the same. If an advocate is found not to have met these requirements, their practising certificate will not be renewed.¹⁰ This is also applicable to in-house advocates.</p> <p>As a result, newly qualified advocates have been drawn to law firms that actively provide pro bono services, supporting compliance with this requirement and offering credit for pro bono hours towards billable targets. This enables advocates to give back to the community, access training opportunities, gain courtroom experience, and handle matters that they otherwise would not participate in mainstream practice.</p> <p>Concerns exist that many advocates may opt to pay the fee, leaving more economically disadvantaged attorneys to provide pro bono work. While attorneys who do not provide 40 hours of pro bono services annually must pay a fine, the Law Council has not yet created a pro bono account to receive these funds. As a result, few advocates provide voluntary pro bono services to members of the public. Therefore, there is an enforcement gap in the legal framework.</p>
<p>6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?</p>	<p>There is no requirement for aspiring lawyers to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers.</p> <p>However, the Advocates Act and the Advocates (Student Practice) Regulations, S.I 70 of 2004 enable students seeking the acquisition of professional skills or experience for the purpose of enrolment and audience to practice if an advocate with a valid practicing certificate accompanies them.¹¹</p>

⁹ See Section 3(1), Advocates (Pro Bono Services to Indigent Persons) Regulations, 2009.

¹⁰ See Section 13 (a) & (b), Advocates (Pro Bono Services to Indigent Persons) Regulations, 2009.

¹¹ See Section 3(2), Advocates (Student Practice) Regulations, 2004.

<p>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?</p>	<p>There are no aspirational pro bono hours targets set by the ULS or within the legal profession. In practice, the ULS, through its Pro Bono Scheme, will assign pro bono matters to an advocate and encourages them to pursue them to resolution. The ULS also recognises advocates who undertake pro bono work through the Pro Bono Award.</p> <p>In-house legal departments, private law firms, and individual advocates usually set their own aspirational pro bono hour targets beyond the applicable mandatory statutory targets.</p>
<p>8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p>	<p>As part of the continuing legal education for advocates, the ULS organises an annual pro bono day in which practicing advocates provide free legal advice to members of the public. The annual pro bono day attracts two CLE points for any participating advocate. An advocate is required to accumulate 20 CLE points each year in order to have their practicing certificate for the next year renewed.</p>
Insurance and advertising	
<p>9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers?</p> <p>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?</p>	<p>There is no requirement for special professional indemnity legal insurance cover for lawyers (including in-house lawyers) providing pro bono legal services.</p> <p>In practice, law firms and other pro bono service providers are generally encouraged to obtain professional indemnity to protect themselves against liability arising from their professional advice and services. Although it is uncommon, individual advocates (including in-house lawyers) can take out their own professional indemnity covers.</p>
<p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p>	<p>Section 80(1)(f) of the Advocates Act and Regulations 22 and 25 of the Advocates Professional Conduct Regulations¹² prohibit advertising by advocates in any way in relation to their profession or business as advocates, except so far as may be necessary to identify their office</p>

¹² See

https://repository.globethics.net/bitstream/handle/20.500.12424/216667/Dennison_TibihikirraKalyegira_advocates_professional.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (last visited 7 January 2025).

	<p>or to provide their address to persons having business communications or dealings with such advocates. This restriction is also applicable to the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>
Pro bono practice and culture	
<p>11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?</p>	<p>The two areas that are in most need of pro bono services in Uganda are land law and family law.</p> <p>Other areas also include child welfare and protection, employment law, probate law, economic rights, and human rights (specifically, refugees and women's rights).</p>
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>The majority of pro bono services in Uganda are provided by non-governmental organisations that are collectively organised as a coalition under the Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET),¹³ with the majority located in urban areas. However, most of the urban located non-governmental organisations have regular outreach programs to rural areas.</p> <p>The Legal Aid Project¹⁴ and the pro bono scheme of the ULS were initiated by the ULS in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and the Law Council, supported by development partners with the aim of promoting access to justice for indigent and vulnerable persons in Uganda. The Legal Aid Project currently operates 23 full legal aid clinics located in the districts of Kampala, Gulu, Jinja, Kabale, Kabarole, Masindi, Soroti, Arua, Luzira, Luweero, Moroto, and Mbarara; and nine satellite clinics located in Abim, Amuria, Kaberamaido, Nakapiripit, Pader, Kitgum, Amudat, Moyo, and Kotido.¹⁵</p> <p>The ULS' pro bono scheme is responsible for providing administration and coordination of pro bono legal services between indigent persons in need of legal services and advocates willing to provide the same services.</p> <p>As part of their corporate social responsibility,</p>

¹³ See <https://www.laspnet.org/> (last visited on 13th February 2025).

¹⁴ See <https://uls.or.ug/pro-bono-scheme/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹⁵ See <https://uls.or.ug/about-lap/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

	<p>private law firms are also increasingly providing pro bono services. Certain law schools, such as the Makerere University, have also established legal aid/pro bono arms. The Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC) was established at the Makerere University School of Law in 2012 and enables both law students and other fully qualified lawyers to provide pro bono advice to indigent persons.</p> <p>Further, employers are increasingly partnering with lawyers to provide pro bono advice to their staff. For example, the Bank of Uganda launched its annual pro bono day in which the bank's panel law firms were invited to offer pro bono advice to its staff in various areas of law.</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>The adoption of innovative technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) by advocates in Uganda is largely a budgetary issue and dependent on how tech savvy and technologically adaptive the individual advocate and firm in personal conduct of a pro bono matter is. Some advocates have generally adopted AI tools such as ChatGPT and continue to delegate and automate functions such as setting reminders, taking meeting minutes, contract review, research, and generating first drafts of legal documentation.</p> <p>Besides individual initiatives, the ULS has developed a mobile application called the "Pulida Wo" app (directly translated as "Your lawyer"), through which indigent people can request pro bono legal services and be connected with willing advocates. The full implementation of this tool, together with other technology applications, however, remains limited, particularly in the current funding environment.</p>
Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts	
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>The Uganda Human Rights Commission as established under Article 51 of the Constitution of Uganda provides pro bono services in situations where there has been violation of human rights.¹⁶</p> <p>The current sources of pro bono services come from civil society organisations that are supervised and vetted by the Legal Aid Sub-</p>

¹⁶ See <https://www.uhrc.ug/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

Committee of the Law Council. Many non-governmental organisations providing free legal services receive funding from foreign groups. Since the availability of monies may vary due to conditions outside their control, their provision of pro bono legal services is unpredictable. Together with the lack of governmental policy and logistical limitations, the provision of pro bono legal services to the vulnerable and those in need can be challenging. A non-exhaustive list of the pro bono legal service providers is set out below.

- The Uganda Law Society: provide pro bono legal services through its flagship projects with the aim of extending access to justice to the poor, indigent, and most vulnerable across Uganda.¹⁷
- The Law Development Centre (LDC) Legal Aid Clinic: was established for the main purpose of improving the quality and breadth of training of Bar Course students and to promote the lawyer's role of service to the community and legal representation of needy persons.¹⁸
- The PILAC of Makerere University: offers pro bono services to indigent persons using its community outreach programmes.¹⁹
- The Refugee Law Project: engages in the provision of free legal assistance to the refugee population and asylum seekers in Uganda.²⁰
- The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers: is affiliated with the *Federacion Internacional de Abogadas* (The International Federation of Women Lawyers) founded in Mexico. It mainly provides legal aid to women in Uganda.²¹
- Platform for Labour Action: promotes and

¹⁷ See <https://uls.or.ug/about-lap/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹⁸ See <https://www ldc.ac.ug/legal-aid-clinic/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹⁹ See <https://www.mak.ac.ug/research/centres/public-interest-law-clinic-pilac> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁰ See https://refugeelawproject.org/index.php?option=com_sppagebuilder&view=page&id=7&Itemid=171 (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²¹ See <https://fidauganda.or.ug/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

	<p>protects the rights of employees in Uganda through the provision of legal aid to employees in the resolution of employment-related disputes.²²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uganda Land Alliance: was formed to enhance access, control, and ownership of land by poor and marginalised people in Uganda.²³• Uganda Network on Law, Ethics, and HIV/AIDS: advocates for the legal and human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.²⁴• Uganda Christian Lawyers' Fraternity: was founded in 1987 by Christian law students at Makerere University. The fraternity is involved in advocacy and representation of disadvantaged people.²⁵• Legal Action for Persons with Disabilities: focuses on ensuring that persons living with disabilities in Uganda have access to justice.²⁶• World Voices Uganda: facilitates access to justice for the poor, and the protection and promotion of human rights, governance and accountability.²⁷• Foundation for Human Rights Initiative: seeks to remove impediments to democratic development and meaningful enjoyment of the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the 1995 Uganda Constitution, as well as other internationally recognised human rights. Focused primarily on promoting human rights, it provides pro bono representation, mainly through public interest cases.²⁸• Human Rights Awareness and Promotion
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²² See <https://www.pla-uganda.org/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²³ See <https://rightsindvelopment.org/member/uganda-land-alliance/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁴ See <http://www.uganet.org> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁵ See <https://ugandachristianlawyers.org/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁶ See <https://lapdaction.org/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁷ See <https://worldvoicesug.org/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁸ See <http://www.fhri.or.ug/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

	<p>Forum: promotes human rights awareness in Uganda. It also provides legal aid services for the advancement of women and minority rights.²⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Justice Mission (IJM): is a Christian non-governmental organisation led by Human Rights professionals, which helps people suffering from injustices and oppression, who have not been able to obtain justice through local authorities. IJM investigates and documents cases of abuse and provides pro bono legal representation to vulnerable individuals.³⁰ • Justice Centres Uganda: promotes the rights of vulnerable communities through basic legal aid, legal and human rights awareness, community outreach, empowerment, and advocacy.³¹
<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>The Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET) is an umbrella body for legal aid service providers and operates as a clearing house, receiving cases from individuals or groups and evaluating whether they are eligible for pro bono services, and thereafter referring them to its member organisations. LASPNET also has a network of community paralegals who collect data and complaints from those unable to reach their offices.³²</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>The ULS recognises advocates for distinguished pro bono services and contributions through the Pro Bono Award, though the award's future is uncertain due to funding withdrawal. We are not aware of any other awards, lists, or rankings related to pro bono work in Uganda.</p>

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Learn more

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²⁹ See <http://hrapf.org> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

³⁰ See <https://ijm.org/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

³¹ See <https://justicecentres.go.ug/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

³² See <https://www.laspnet.org/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).