

LAW FOR CHANGE STUDENT COMPETITION 2019

TEAM 7	PROJECT TITLE Access to Justice Fellowship
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INTRODUCTION



The Access To Justice Fellowship (**A2J Fellowship**) aims to tackle the social, economic, and institutional barriers to access to justice in Hong Kong by offering an innovative and bottom-up solution to promote and establish sustainable partnerships in public interest law (**PIL**).

Our proposed project is a 10-month long fellowship that places two law graduates with a strong legal background in two partnering NGOs to undertake quasi-legal capacity building projects. This has two aims: first, to strengthen the NGOs' legal capacities, which will in turn benefit the communities served by the NGOs; and secondly, to allow our Fellows to apply their legal background and skills in a PIL context.

This Fellowship was specifically structured in light of this year's themes of "community" and "sustainability" - through this self-sustainable project which will run

annually, we hope to build a strong symbiotic PIL ecosystem that brings together various stakeholders. Currently, rather strict divisions exist in the Hong Kong legal scene - for instance, between the private and public legal sectors (where it appears that corporate law and PIL are two different worlds), and between lawyers and NGOs (where the relationships are often quite hierarchical). We want to bring all stakeholders together, level the playing field, and ultimately create a PIL ecosystem that is mutually-beneficial and capable of empowering sustainable long-term relationships that will improve the growth and development of PIL in Hong Kong. Indeed, our focus on our three main stakeholders (law students/graduates interested in PIL, local grassroots NGOs, and the communities they serve) inspired the triangular logo for the Fellowship. Ultimately, we aim for this Fellowship to develop into a prestigious, well-recognised one that will strengthen the PIL community in Hong Kong.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Access to Justice in Hong Kong

The social issue the Fellowship aims to address is access to justice - specifically, the social, economic, and institutional barriers to access to justice in Hong Kong, which most adversely affects the marginalised and vulnerable communities in Hong Kong. Although access to justice is guaranteed under the Basic Law and there are existing channels to attain legal assistance (such as the publicly-funded Legal Aid and the Duty Lawyer Service, pro bono services provided by law firms, and NGOs focusing on addressing legal needs like Justice Centre), the reality is that these are still inadequate in meeting community needs, meaning that access to justice is often delayed or even denied.

To understand why this may be the case, our team conducted field surveys and interviews over the past three months by speaking to people across various

sectors, including two academics¹, seven NGOs² and lawyers pre- and post-qualification from seven law firms³. We also conducted an online survey, which attracted responses from 50 current law students and recent law graduates, to better understand their exposure to and interest in PIL. From our research, there are a plethora of reasons why so many barriers to access to justice exist, but for the purposes of this project, we are focusing on two main realities and thus have targeted our energy on alleviating the pressures created by these:

1. The lack of legal expertise and capacity within NGOs

NGOs play a crucial role in providing legal support and access to justice for vulnerable communities in Hong Kong, whether in the form of liaising with lawyers, case management support or public policy research and advocacy to push for reforms in various areas of PIL,

because they have direct access to the communities that need such legal support. This is backed up by PILnet Hong Kong's 2017 study, where PILnet interviewed 11 NGOs and found that they collectively assisted close to 8,000 legal cases in 2015.

While this is a significant number, it is on the lower end when compared to the number of people who have legal needs in Hong Kong. NGOs are unable to provide more support because the current regulatory framework in Hong Kong prohibits NGOs from directly hiring qualified lawyers to give legal advice to their target groups, resulting in NGOs relying heavily on external legal support. Within NGOs, few staff members are legally trained and qualified to deal with legal matters. This lack of legal expertise and capacity have the following effects:

(a) NGOs' limited ability to use relevant legislation, common law, and legal procedures to aid their clients in solving legal problems: According to PILnet's study, the lack of internal legal expertise has impeded NGOs from (i) providing early legal assistance to prevent clients from having to go down the route of litigation; (ii) providing suitable and targeted legal information to clients; (iii) following up on the legal advice provided by lawyers in the interim (between meetings); and (iv) handling urgent cases (e.g. where injunction has to be sought / there is a short time-limit for the claim). All of the above are important aspects of access to justice.

To illustrate with an example, Hong Kong Women Workers' Association (**HKWWA**) is a local, grassroots NGO based in Kwun Tong that serves and empowers female employees. HKWWA is one of our potential partnering NGOs, and during our interview with them, we were told that the lack of legal knowledge and capacity is an issue that the NGO is facing. HKWWA handles around 30 employment cases annually, and the staff recognises that lay clients find it difficult to fill out forms, understand the complicated legal procedures for labour disputes and prepare for the Labour Tribunal hearings. As a result of the lack of manpower (they only have 5 staff members) and legal expertise (no one is legally trained), they find

it hard to adequately assist their clients with their legal issues, and can only refer legal questions to NGOs with more established legal support. They also do not have an efficient case management system to track the progress of their cases, but hopes to develop one. HKWWA acknowledged their inadequate capacity and/or knowledge to conduct detailed research on complicated employment issues, advocacy work and the significant deficiencies in the procedures relating to Labour Tribunal proceedings.

(b) NGOs' limited ability to maximize their support to pro bono lawyers: The less developed legal case management systems in NGOs makes it difficult for them to help pro bono lawyers understand the clients' legal needs and situation when giving legal advice. Another one of our potential partner NGOs, Society for Community Organisation (**SoCO**), stated that clients often approach them with many grievances, where the legal issues are often unapparent. It takes manpower to conduct preliminary assessments and identify legal issues, organise information, and compile them into legal briefs, but that is beyond their capacity. Therefore, the case information provided to lawyers are disorganised without clearly defined legal issues. This hinders the time it takes for lawyers to fully understand the client's case and their needs. Tiffany Wong, an Associate at Vidler & Co., reflected that it would be very helpful and efficient if the NGOs that refer cases to lawyers can submit to lawyers a clear brief explaining the client's position, a chronology of events and some basic legal research.

2. Limited opportunities for law students to receive training in PIL and to explore it as a part of their career path

(a) Reasons for a lack of PIL lawyers in HK: The legal landscape for PIL in Hong Kong is considerably undersaturated. With only a handful of law firms specialising in public interest litigation, the limited allocation of resources by both the government and corporate law firms towards PIL, and the regulatory restrictions on legal practice within NGOs, the opportunities for law students and graduates to explore PIL are limited. This inevitably results in a

lack of public interest lawyers in Hong Kong, and even those providing pro bono services on behalf of commercial law firms lack the 'on-ground' insight that can only be gained from working in close partnership with the communities. Both are important contributors to the barriers to access to justice - without enough lawyers to address peoples' legal needs, the most vulnerable will often lose out.

(b) There is a lack of opportunities for law students to receive PIL training: The survey results from law students revealed that while 78% of respondents said that they were interested in PIL, only 28% said that their law schools provide enough opportunities for them to explore public interest law. During our interview with Professor Ramsden of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), he noted that regulatory restrictions require law schools to partner with practitioners covered by the Indemnity Scheme in order to run a legal clinic. However, many teaching staff are qualified overseas and are not covered by this scheme, meaning that law schools can only offer very few clinical opportunities for their students; in the case of CUHK, there are only 6 places for the public interest law advocacy course which are overwhelmed by applications. The majority of law graduates do not have experience handling cases with lay clients in PIL before entering practice.

(c) Effects of a lack of opportunities: The lack of exposure and understanding in PIL practice, coupled with limited training opportunities and limited career opportunities, drive students to take the commercial route. Over 90% of the respondents of our survey observed that the majority of their peers in law school aim to go to an international commercial firm/commercial set. Only six applied to human rights law firms, two to firms specialising in public law and one to an NGO tackling human trafficking. This trend evidences a vicious cycle, where few law students are trained to be public interest lawyers to handle sophisticated or contentious public interest law cases.

While it is encouraging to see that 84% of the respondents indicated their willingness to do pro bono work in private practice, this only emphasises the need for law students to have a strong and first-hand understanding of the needs of the community before they go into practice. Pro bono lawyers, especially those partnering with less-resourced NGOs, may receive minimal training and have to learn the area of law from scratch. Having first-hand contact with the community they are serving to appreciate the big picture of the needs of the entire community, instead of being trapped by tunnel vision because of the limited scope of pro bono work they engage in, will benefit their work. More training will also improve the quality and quantity of pro bono work they do, thus improving the access to justice issue identified.

Comparisons: We also looked at other fellowship programmes both in HK and overseas, and found that there is precedent, need, and demand for the A2J Fellowship program.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PROJECT PLAN

Goals

- To alleviate the pressures of unmet legal needs in Hong Kong by building up the legal capacity of NGOs;
- To provide an opportunity for law students passionate about PIL to take a first step towards exploring PIL in their career path; and
- To connect and bring together relevant stakeholders within the PIL community in Hong Kong.

Objectives

- To increase access to justice in Hong Kong, especially for underserved and grassroots communities in the city, by increasing the legal capacity of NGOs;
- To promote public interest law in the careers of law students; and
- To foster a greater understanding and awareness about the importance of PIL in Hong Kong.

Project Plan

The Fellowship programme entails placing two law graduates within five years of graduating in two partnering NGOs to carry out a project plan for the NGOs and the communities they serve for ten months. The partnering NGOs selected would be local, grassroots NGOs that serve vulnerable communities in Hong Kong without strong legal background and/or support. The Fellow will then support the NGOs' work with their legal knowledge and experience, while gaining on-the-ground insight on the realities of public interest work. Fellows will also receive a monthly stipend of HK\$20,000 throughout the 10 months. This project addresses the two issues identified in the Problem Analysis section above in the following ways:

1. Lack of legal expertise and capacity within NGOs

Due to legal restrictions, the Fellow would not be giving legal advice, but there are still a number of possible projects that can be carried out.

- **Fellows can provide a legal perspective to the issues addressed by NGOs:** The legally trained Fellows can spot both legal and quasi-legal issues, and can navigate the legal system due to their knowledge of civil and/or criminal procedures. The eligibility requirements for Fellows depend on the specific needs of the NGO in order to match the NGOs' pressing needs with the Fellows' skills and expertise. For instance, for HKWWA, applicants should have some familiarity with civil procedure, the tribunal system, and employment law.
- **The Fellowship is a knowledge-building process to strengthen the legal capacity of the NGOs in the long term:** The Fellows can help build up the NGO's capacity in legal service provision and advocacy, and this is sustainable in that it will benefit the NGO even after the Fellowship ends. The specific tasks for each Fellow will differ depending on the specific needs of the NGO and the communities they serve. For example, Fellows can help develop an effective case management system that will help with easier identification of legal issues and organisation of information; create pamphlets/basic toolkits with commonly faced legal problems and guides for legal procedures that will increase the legal knowledge of NGO staff members; building a database of precedents for future reference; creating issue-specific information packs for pro bono lawyers, etc. Private law firms excel in building and maintaining institutional knowledge, and such a system is often lacking in how NGOs deal with legal cases. Having such systems will improve the services provided by the NGOs to our communities in the long term.
- **The A2J Fellowship can connect the NGOs with a wider network of legally trained individuals:** The NGO will not only work closely with the Fellow placed in their NGO, but also be exposed to the A2J team, the Fellow's legal mentor and our Fellowship's network. This is a wider network of financial and human resources support that they can turn to if needed.

2. Limited opportunities for law students to receive training in PIL and to explore it as part of their career path

The Fellowship will provide an opportunity for PIL-minded law graduates to see how PIL can actually be implemented in practice to serve our communities. We hope that by giving young graduates an opportunity to explore PIL in the early stages of their career, they can use the knowledge gained to drive positive impact and change in public interest law-related fields in the future.

- **Conduct legal research and undertake legal drafting:** Develops their legal research skills and knowledge in that area of PIL, and allows them to hone their legal drafting skills (by writing reports, research notes, etc.), all of which are relevant skills needed to undertake PIL-related work.
- **Ability to interact with lay clients:** Exposure to clients when working in the NGOs will give them first hand insights into the legal problems and issues faced by lay clients. After working on many cases, they will be able to synthesize the knowledge they've gained, identify the structural problems that the community is facing and know what specific areas to look out for. This is crucial when they engage with PIL work in the future, whether in pro bono departments of law firms, in NGOs or otherwise, as it helps them better serve their clients.
- **On the job exposure and training:** Learning the law from an academic perspective and practicing it on the ground can be a very different experience sometimes, so this Fellowship will allow Fellows to see how PIL can actually be used and implemented in practice.
- **Participating in international conferences related to PIL:** Fellows will be given the opportunity to attend an international conference (eg. the Asia Pro Bono Conference/the PILnet Global Forum) to increase their exposure to PIL and to meet and learn from like-minded individuals.
- **Training by the A2J Fellowship program:** A2J's own training programs, such as how to conduct client interviews, what an effective case management system looks like, etc. will help Fellows improve their soft skills.

- **Mentoring by experienced public interest lawyers:** Fellows can build a strong and close relationship with their mentors, who have a lot of experience working in fields related to PIL. Besides providing tips and comments to the Fellows for the purposes of the Fellowship, mentors may also provide valuable career advice.

Project Development and Timeline

Our project consists of five stages. Stages 2-5 will be repeated for each Fellowship round. We envision for the Fellowship to be an annual 10-month partnership between the legal and NGO sectors which will continue for years to come. Therefore, we recognise that our project is a long-term one that continues beyond the one-year implementation period of the PILnet Competition. Nevertheless, 2020 is crucial in the development of the Fellowship, as we will be completing Stages 1-2, and finishing half of Stage 3.

STAGE 1: INCEPTION

The inception stage involves completing administrative tasks to set up the structure of the Fellowship. This includes starting the incorporation process, opening a bank account, creating our website and social media platforms, etc. The costs related to these tasks will come from a mix of the seed funding from PILnet and pro bono support from our networks.

STAGE 2: RESEARCH, LIAISON, AND ADMINISTRATION

During this stage, the A2J team will conduct stakeholder research and identify potential project partners (NGOs, legal mentors who will provide guidance and support to the Fellows, and sponsors). This stage requires drafting project proposals tailored to each stakeholder and liaising and meeting with them. Upon finalising our list of project partners, a Needs Assessment to identify potential projects the incoming Fellow may work on with the NGO.

Relevant stakeholders: NGOs, communities served by NGOs, legal mentors and funders

STAGE 3: RECRUITMENT AND REFINING OF FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Having finalised our NGO partners, we will prepare recruitment materials and the eligibility requirements accordingly, and begin to promote the Fellowship to law students and fresh graduates via email, social media, and recruitment talks at the three law schools in Hong Kong.

Applications will open until January of the following year, until which the 3-Stage review process will be conducted between February to April 2021.

Round 1: Online applications

Round 2: Assessment Day (group activity and panel interview)

Round 3: Selection by partnering NGOs

A 2nd Consultation between the Fellow, partnering NGO and legal mentor will be held to finalise the full-year Project Plan.

Relevant stakeholders: Law students interested in PIL, NGOs, communities served by NGOs and legal mentors

STAGE 4: FELLOWSHIP

In August, the Fellow will be required to attend training. Throughout the Fellowship, there will be ongoing meetings between project partners and the A2J team to monitor the progress of the partnership. Meanwhile, the A2J team will commence Recruitment for the 2022 Fellowship.

Relevant stakeholders: Law students interested in PIL, NGOs, communities served by NGOs and legal mentors

STAGE 5: CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

A2J will bring together the Fellows and the project partners for an end of year evaluation. In August, an End of Year event will be held to showcase the Fellows' projects with their NGO partners; the Event will also serve as a networking and fundraising opportunity for Fellows and project partners.

Relevant stakeholders: Law students interested in PIL, NGOs, communities served by NGOs, legal mentors, and funders

Task	Time
STAGE 1: Inception	
1. Incorporation and s 88 status: begin incorporation process and apply for s 88 charitable status	Beginning Jan 2020
2. Create all necessary accounts and websites: email, social media, bank, etc.	
STAGE 2: Research, Liaison, and Administration	
1. Liaising with partnering NGOs: research and identify potential partnering NGOs, conduct Needs Assessment and finalise list of NGOs.	Jan - Aug 2020
2. Liaising with legal mentors: identify potential legal mentors, and 1st Consultation with NGOs to develop general Fellowship Plan	
3. Approaching sponsors: prepare proposals and speak to sponsors	
STAGE 3: Recruitment and Refining of Fellowship Program	
1. Promotion and outreach	Sep 2020 - Apr 2021
2. Recruitment Process (Feb to Apr 2021)	
3. Refining of Fellowship Program	
STAGE 4: Fellowship	
Ongoing: Mentor-Fellow check-ins - bimonthly, A2J-NGO check-ins - monthly, Training - at least twice	Aug 2021 - Jun 2022
Others: End of Year Report, Conference	
STAGE 5: Conclusion and Evaluation	
1. Evaluation and refining for Fellowship Round 2	Jun - Aug 2022
2. End of Year Fundraising event	Aug 2022

Budget and Cost-Effectiveness

Our budget contains two parts: (1) Administrative costs; and (2) Funding directly for the benefit of the Fellows. The budget assumes that all listed matters will be necessary; however, cost-effectiveness measures

will be taken to reduce costs, such as reaching out to professors who are in support of our project at HKU to book rooms at the university for us for the Assessment Day; speaking to the relevant organisations for fee waivers for conference tickets, etc. The items which are negotiable have been marked with an asterisk (*).

1. Proposed Budget (from seed funding): Administrative and Operational Costs (Jan 2020 - Aug 2022)

This involves the administrative costs of running the Fellowship program itself. These costs for the inaugural Fellowship will be covered by the funding awarded to the winning team if we are awarded the HK\$50,000.

Item	Cost per unit (HK\$)	Quantity	Item Cost (HK\$)
STAGE 1: Inception			
General			
Printing and stationery	n/a	n/a	5,000
Incorporation* and Finances			
Application for Incorporation via Incorporation Form NNC1G	170	1	170
Members' contribution	–	–	–
Business Registration (3-year certificate) Form IRBR1	3,950	1	3,950
Filing of Annual Return via Form NAR1	105	1	105
Appointment of Company Secretary (per year)	1,500	2	3,000
Website			
Domain	296	1	296
Hosting (per month)	15.5	20	310
Connecting domain to Google Suite (per month)	23.4	20	468
STAGE 2: Research, Liaison, and Administration			
Printing (proposals, Needs Assessment, etc.)	0.3	500	150
STAGE 3: Recruitment			
Promotion			
Venue booking* for Recruitment Talks (per hour)	600	3	1,800
Printing (posters and pamphlets for Recruitment Talks)	0.35	1,000	350
Social media promotion (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	50	120	6,000
Assessment Day(s)			
Venue booking* (per hour)	500	6	3,000
Refreshments*	30	15	450
Printing (assessment materials)	0.3	45	14
STAGE 4: Fellowship			
Check-ins with Project Partners (ongoing)			
Printing (assessment charts and misc. items)	0.2	100	20
STAGE 5: Conclusion and Evaluation			
End of Year Fundraising event			
Printing (End of Year booklet)	N/A	300	1,481
Venue booking* (per hour)	600	6	3,600
Refreshments / Catering*	150	100	15,000
Token of appreciation for Mentor, NGO, Fellow*	100	10	1,000
TOTAL:			46,164

2. Proposed Budget (from funders): Directly or the benefit of the Fellows (Aug 2021 - Jun 2022)

For the A2J Fellowship to be possible, fundraising is a necessary core component of our project.

Item	Cost per unit (HK\$)	Quantity	Item Cost (HK\$)
Training and Capacity Building x 2			
Venue booking* (per hour)	200	4	800
Printing	0.2	100	20
International Conference			
Conference Tickets *	507	2	1,014
Flight ticket + insurance	6,000	2	12,000
Hotel (per night x 2)	1,500	8	12,000
Per diem (per Fellow)	1,500	2	3,000
Stipend and other subsidies			
Fellows' monthly stipend	20,000	20	400,000
Reimbursements for Fellowship-related expenses (e.g. travel, printing, etc.)	5,000	2	10,000
TOTAL:			438,834
COST PER FELLOW:			219,417

PLAN FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A monitoring and evaluation plan is devised to continually measure the impact and effectiveness of the A2J Fellowship in fulfilling its goals mentioned on page 72 above. While the goals are difficult to measure quantitatively, we will adopt various qualitative measures to assess the usefulness of the Fellows' work for the NGO, how the Fellows view their learning experience, and whether/how the Fellowship helps them with their work in the future.

Pre-Program

Meetings and training workshops will be held for the partnering NGOs and Fellows to finalize the year-plan and manage expectations of both sides.

Throughout the Fellowship

In addition to close communication with and general support from the A2J admin team throughout the 10-month Fellowship program, structured evaluation mechanisms will be put into place:

NGO-Fellow evaluation**Structure of the evaluation**

Three sessions: 1. Initial 2. Mid-year 3. End of Year
Each session involves the NGO and Fellow (1) completing separate evaluation forms; and (2) a meeting between them

Content of the evaluation

- **NGO:** The NGOs will evaluate the Fellow's performance and the implementation of the year-plan, and the effectiveness of the Fellow's work to the NGO and the community they serve.
- **Fellows:** Fellows will be asked to evaluate the cooperation with the NGO, their personal growth throughout the programme and the implementation of the year-plan.

A2J -NGO; and A2J-Fellow evaluation (separate)**Structure of the evaluation**

Three sessions (as above): A2J team will meet with the NGOs and Fellows separately

Content of the evaluation

To discuss their views on the A2J Fellowship, the Fellow's progress, areas for improvement, etc.

Fellow-Mentor meetings**Structure of the evaluation**

Bi-monthly self-arranged meetings between Fellows and Mentors

Content of the evaluation

Through the meetings, our fellows will receive valuable guidance, and our mentors can also engage with the local community in a novel and meaningful way

Post-Program

The Fellow will prepare an evaluation report and presentation at the End of Year Event.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The A2J Fellowship follows a three-strand sustainability model:

1. Sustainability within the A2J team and Fellowship model:

For the Fellowship to continue and develop over the years, there are two aspects of sustainability in the model of the A2J team.

(a) Administrative sustainability: Firstly, the five of us as founding members of the Fellowship will commit to the administration of the Fellowship (including administering the Fellowship, conducting training for Fellows, and liaising with all relevant stakeholders) for at least the first two rounds of the Fellowship, i.e. until June 2023. During our inaugural Fellowship year, we will recruit Year 2 - 4 university students and form a student society that will help with the administrative work for the 2nd round of the Fellowship, when we as founding members will have the experience from the 1st round to guide them and allocate work to them. After the 2nd round of the Fellowship, we will stay as consultants who set the direction of each year's Fellowship (eg. what partnering NGOs to reach out to) while students as administrators will liaise with various parties. It is important to involve present university students interested in PIL, as they can be introduced to how law meets public interest in practice at an early stage of their study and be inspired to explore career options beyond corporate law. This also adds to the building of a sustainable network by involving current students that are interested in PIL.

Further, Fellows will also be recruited to become part of the consultant team after the completion of the programme. This way, the knowledge and experience gained as a Fellow could be retained and passed on in the A2J team.

(b) Financial sustainability: The initial budget will be utilized to support the administrative cost for the inaugural Fellowship. We will sustain our financial needs in the following years by seeking diverse sources of funding, including but not limited to foundations, high net-worth individuals, universities and the general public. By involving more sources of funding, we can minimise the reliance on a single donor and simultaneously raise awareness about the importance of PIL amongst the public. We also aim to secure long term funding (e.g. 2/3

years) instead of one-off donations, as we believe the impact of our Fellowship requires time to develop. Thus, a long term commitment from funders echoes our long term goal of developing a sustainable PIL community.

2. Sustainability of training for PIL and exploring PIL in their career:

This Fellowship program fits into a law student's exploration of PIL in their career path by training them in the relevant skills needed to undertake PIL-related work. These skills and experiences are transferable to other areas of PIL and are not limited only to working at a public interest law firm. Upon completing the Fellowship, we believe its impact can be sustained through a variety of ways such as:

(a) Working in existing public interest law firms: Examples include Daly & Associates, Vidler & Co, Patricia Ho & Associates, etc. This is the most direct way to pursue PIL, but we recognise that opportunities are limited, and such a career may not be for everyone;

(b) Joining NGOs: Utilise the legal and practical knowledge and skills they have learned during the Fellowship when working in NGOs;

(c) Joining commercial firms and making positive changes in the pro bono department: The one-year first hand experience with our partnering NGOs will give the Fellows (and thus the pro bono departments of their law firms) a deeper and more genuine understanding of the needs of the community. This includes (i) understanding the legal, quasi-legal and structural issues faced by the communities they serve, (ii) the issues to look out for in that particular area of PIL, and (iii) how law firms can best address the needs of the particular community. It would also open opportunities to introduce a more diverse range of NGOs (non-English based, local grassroots NGOs) to city firms, effectively increasing access to justice for a wider range of communities.

3. Sustainability of access to justice for the NGOs: Our Fellowship provides partner NGOs with continued support throughout the 10-month period, as opposed to the one-off case-based pro bono services that are not ideal for NGOs with

continuous needs and long-term projects. Our tailored year-plan helps partner NGOs to identify their short-term and long-term legal needs and find ways for the Fellow to assist the NGO in fulfilling these needs.

Additionally, our Fellows seek to set up and develop sustainable models that fit with the long-term legal needs of the NGOs and that the NGOs could adopt in the future. As the classic saying goes: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for his lifetime". We believe our approach of enhancing the capacity of NGOs is sustainable and efficient, and we hope this ultimately reduces the amount of unmet legal needs within vulnerable communities.

Furthermore, the network built through the Fellowship would continue to provide a supportive PIL, thereby promoting access to justice for all in the long-term. This includes Fellows who continue to contribute in public interest law in various playing fields, legal mentors that developed relationships with the Fellows, and NGOs with newly-established partnerships with A2J and the Fellows. By involving various stakeholders, a vibrant community will be developed to support the sustainable development of PIL in Hong Kong.

Strategy for Growth and Multiplier Effect

After completing our inaugural Fellowship commencing in August 2021, the A2J team will have more experience in undertaking the various stages of the process identified above. We aim to use our insights to continuously improve the next round of fellowships, and increase the number of partnering NGOs and fellows with every round. As time passes, we aim to

build a strong and sustainable network of Fellows, legal mentors, partnering NGOs and a wealthy knowledge base that can be passed on.

Our projected growth for the first three years is as follows:

- Year 1 - 2021 Fellowship: 2 Fellows (with 2 partnering NGOs)
- Year 2 - 2022 Fellowship: 3 Fellows (with 3 partnering NGOs)
- Year 3 - 2023 Fellowship: 5 Fellows (with 5 partnering NGOs)

Specific plans we have for expansion and growth include:

- 1. Market expansion in recruitment:** After our inaugural Fellowship, we aim to promote our Fellowship and recruit fellows who studied overseas but have a solid understanding of Hong Kong law and plan to work in Hong Kong post-graduation. We hope that this will attract the best talent, and that the Fellows, upon completing the Fellowship, will serve the Hong Kong community.
- 2. Diversification of NGOs:** Over time, we hope to build strong connections with existing partnering NGOs while connecting with new ones. Establishing partnerships with a wide range of NGOs serving various communities is our aim, because ultimately, we hope to help improve the general legal capacity of NGOs in Hong Kong.
- 3. More training for Fellows:** Taking inspiration from Teach For Hong Kong, a local NGO that provides weekly training to its fellows who teach in Hong Kong secondary schools, we aim to hold more training (both legal and soft skills, such as negotiation and client interviewing skills) for our Fellows and to provide them with even more support than we do in our inaugural model. ■

REFERENCE:

1. Ms. Lindsay Ernst, Lecturer in Human Rights Experiential Learning and Associate Director, Centre for Comparative and Public Law, University of Hong Kong, and Professor Michael Ramsden, Director of the Centre for Rights and Justice and Co-Director of the Clinic for Public Interest Advocacy, the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
2. Agent of Change (Social Enterprise) Ltd, Hong Kong Dignity Institute, Hong Kong Women Workers' Association, PILnet, Society for Community Organisation, Chosen Power, and Teach for Hong Kong.
3. Clifford Chance, Daly & Associates, Davis Polk & Wardwell, Linklaters, Mayer Brown and Vidler & Co. Solicitors.