



PILnet

Annual Report 2020



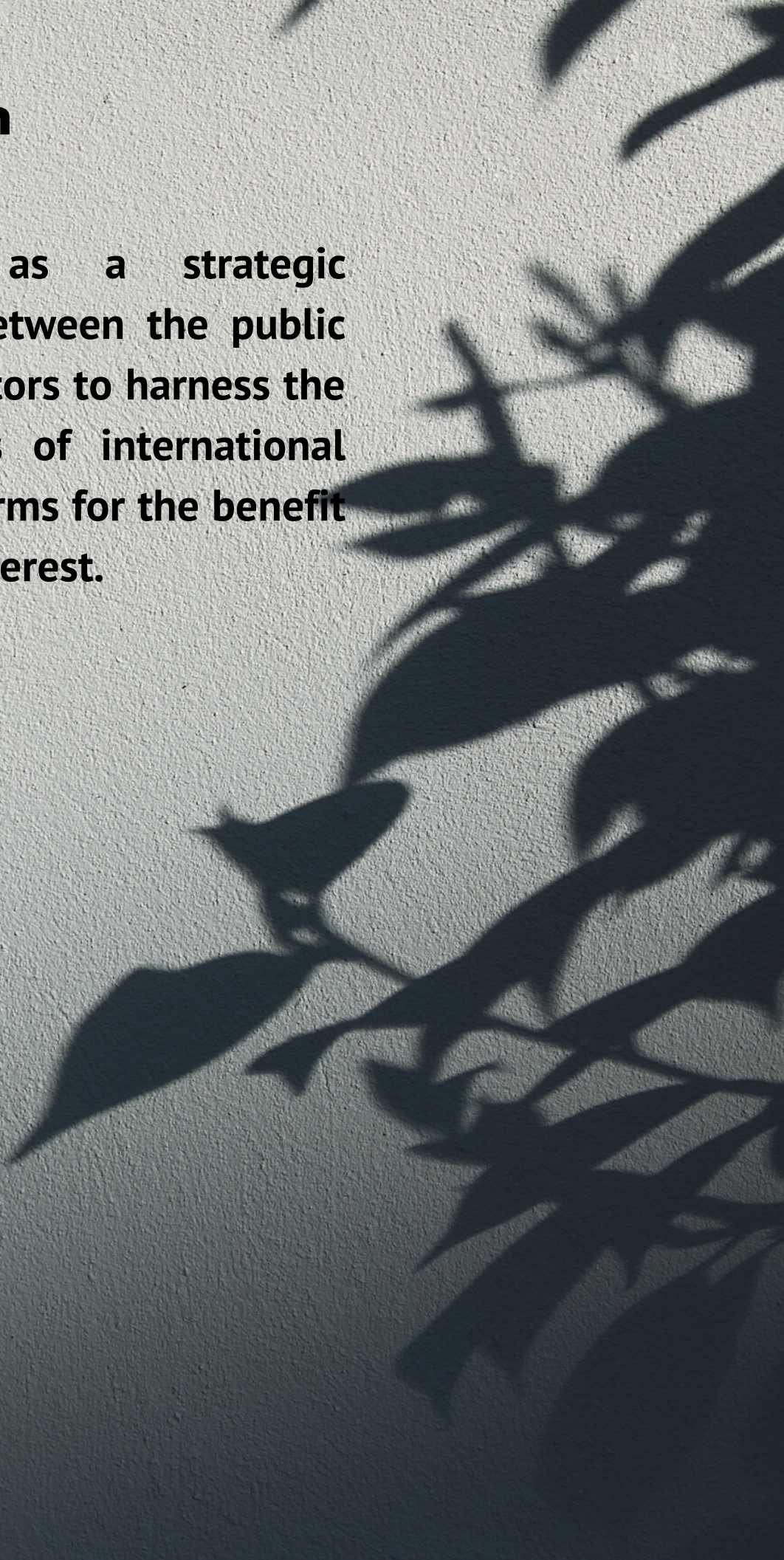
*In just societies,
law works for all*

"The drive to engage in pro bono work often grows out of a desire to promote the ideals of fairness and justice. Many of us were first attracted to the law with these ideals in mind. Our partnership with PILnet enables us to pursue unique pro bono opportunities to advocate for these values and stay connected to what inspired us to become lawyers in the first place."

**— Wendy Atrokhov, Public Service Counsel, Director
of Global Pro Bono, Latham & Watkins**

The Mission

PILnet acts as a strategic intermediary between the public and private sectors to harness the legal resources of international and local law firms for the benefit of the public interest.



Message from the Executive Director

When the global pandemic struck, we at PILnet didn't miss a beat. Our team quickly figured out how to stay safe, then rolled our sleeves up and did everything we could to help our clients. Organizations were struggling to support communities facing loss of work, evictions, displacement, and discrimination during the pandemic while they themselves were reeling under financial and operational uncertainty. **A steadfast, reliable partner for civil society everywhere, PILnet rose to the occasion, and we are proud of what we accomplished.**

With the support of dozens of major multinational and local law firms, we provided direct assistance to 164 organizations in 2020 in nearly 50 jurisdictions across the globe. That represented an impressive increase of 32% more legal matters for PILnet than in 2019. PILnet provided support across a spectrum of legal needs: from protection of people trafficked in Thailand; to expert guidance for European groups maneuvering data privacy regulations; to advice for Hong Kong organizations struggling with employment, contracts, and governance challenges during the pandemic.

Most importantly, so many of the hundreds of organizations we worked with have developed long-lasting relationships with the lawyers who helped them during this challenging year. One lawyer in Hong Kong became so invested in an organization she helped that she ended up joining their board!

PILnet also obtained law firm pledges amounting to more than 160,000 pro bono hours to support refugees and other forcibly displaced people and held its fourth annual Law for Change Student Competition in Hong Kong. We hosted our first-ever online Global Forum for 600 lawyers, advocates, and academics. The widest-reaching in our history, the event was touted by attendees as “thoughtful,” “engaging,” and “impressive!”

We are proud of this praise from our network of *thoughtful, engaged*, and yes, *impressive* lawyers and advocates who help make PILnet stronger by working tirelessly to expand access to justice to organizations and the communities they serve.

To them and to all of our generous supporters, partners, and friends, we wish you a healthy and productive year ahead, brightened by a growing light at the end of the tunnel toward which we are all moving.

Leila Saad
Executive Director



Making Law Work For All

OPPORTUNITY FOR LAWYERS

Like so much else this year, the PILnet 2020 Global Forum took place virtually, which allowed **hundreds of lawyers to meet with global peers, academics, and NGO representatives** to join discussions on addressing systemic racism, the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable communities, partnering for children's rights, and other legal strategies to protect society. Conversations at the Forum led to new and strengthened global partnerships and the development of initiatives to support refugees and fight for climate justice.

Lawyers in PILnet's network were also afforded the opportunity to expand



Session on protecting refugees at the 2020 Global Forum.

their knowledge to more effectively put the power of law to work for civil society. Through our anti-trafficking in persons project, almost **200 lawyers were trained on national and international trafficking laws** to support CSOs in Hong Kong, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

**LAW FOR
CHANGE**
STUDENT COMPETITION

250
students

95
mentors

12
**active
projects**

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

PILnet understands that we can only support the global pro bono ecosystem by ensuring that the next generation of lawyers will continue the work. Since 2017, PILnet has hosted 4 cycles of the Hong Kong Law for Change Student Competition. To date, **12 winning project ideas are being implemented in the community**. We are grateful to the dozens of legal and NGO professionals who served as mentors, and to those that will, to make this possible.

We also **provide educational and experiential opportunities for nascent lawyers** including PILnet's International Fellowship and our Regional Fellowship in Asia. These programs provide participants secondments at NGOs, including at PILnet, to gain hands-on experience applying the law to promote the social good. In 2021, PILnet will be piloting an online course on public interest lawyering to increase the reach of these efforts.

Making Law Work For All

SUPPORTING CSOs

PILnet **provided essential legal resources** to NGOs and social enterprises to protect their organizations, staff, and beneficiaries when the world changed due to Covid-19. They obtained legal assistance on labor and employment laws, cybersecurity and data protection, and emergency government assistance programs through PILnet's Clearinghouses, individual virtual sessions, and legal clinics. PILnet also held workshops for NGOs on securing data, assessing liability concerns, and legal writing.

Success Stories

PILnet began a project in 2020, in partnership with **European Center for Not-for-Profit Law and DLA Piper**, along with other partners, to create a registration guide for NGOs in dozens of jurisdictions around the world. This not only creates a single reference for activists to learn how to **legally register an organization and other legal requirements**, but allows transnational initiatives the opportunity to find the best legal jurisdiction for their entity.

An interactive, user-friendly app will be developed and launch in 2021.



Ecologizer, PILnet Clearinghouse client, celebrate the registration of their organization

"PILnet makes a huge difference for young NGOs and helps them to grow as an organization by improving due diligence right from the start." - Uplifters

Migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong face difficult working conditions, the potential for abuse, and few workers' protections. When PILnet was asked by a passionate advocate wanting **to enable migrant workers in Hong Kong to transform their lives**, PILnet immediately coordinated with its network of expert lawyers to help.

From that, **Uplifters** was formed, an organization who aims to unleash the combined power of online education and community support to improve migrant workers' life and vocational skills. The lawyer involved in the matter became so invested in the inspiring work of this organization that she joined the board, and the Uplifters could not be happier!

Making Law Work For All

Success Stories

Across the world, advocacy and activism have created greater access for people with disabilities. One successful technique is to study well-developed laws and regulations of other countries to understand the scope for progress at home. That is just what PILnet's pro bono partners did for **Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia's "Accessible Kazakhstan" project team.**

Lawyers compared legislative practices in Germany and Japan about accessible construction standards and violation complaint procedures and investigated other legal methods to ensure public and corporate compliance.



Courtesy of Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia in Kazakhstan, PILnet Clearinghouse client

With this expert research, the organization is now **developing trainings and drafting recommendations** for practices within the public and private sectors in Kazakhstan — an act to move us all one step closer to a more fair and equitable world.

Transparency and accountability are not usually words associated with the international sale of arms. **The Omega Research Foundation**, based in the U.K., aims to shed light on the use, trade, and manufacture of military, security, and police equipment, seeking to expose companies and governments flouting regulations. Given the highly sensitive nature of their research, the organization must carefully manage its risks.

That's where lawyers came in. A U.K. firm in PILnet's network, with experience in protecting NGOs who monitor government activities, **provided invaluable legal assistance to manage the risks of libel or defamation** for a report it published on the trade and use of equipment in Brazil. The result was a wealth of information that would otherwise never see the light of day, published by an organization now resilient enough to withstand scrutiny and criticism and safeguarded from legal repercussions.

**In 2020
PILnet
helped
32% more
CSOs than
in 2019**

Pro Bono Clearinghouse Stats

The clearinghouse mechanism is a PILnet strategy to cultivate lasting, sustainable, and mutually beneficial partnerships between law firms, the private sector, and organizations working in the public interest.

PILnet Clearinghouses are united by one guiding principle: **ensuring that law works not only for the rich and powerful, but for the poor and vulnerable as well.**



2020 Financial Brief

In 2020, PILnet was grateful to have received generous assistance from its many supporters. With these funds, PILnet delivered valuable legal support to civil society organizations around the world.

PILnet is a global nonprofit organization and is legally registered in the United States, Hong Kong, and Hungary.

2020 Financial Year

Total Support and Revenue	\$1,716,005
Total Expenses	\$1,937,480
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Change in Net Assets	\$(221,475)
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Net Assets (Beginning)	\$2,310,034
Net Assets (Ending)	\$2,088,559

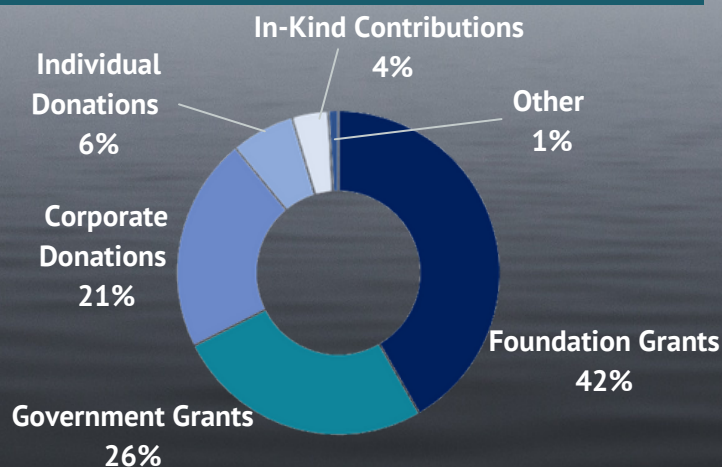
**In 2020, lawyers
provided more than**

8,000

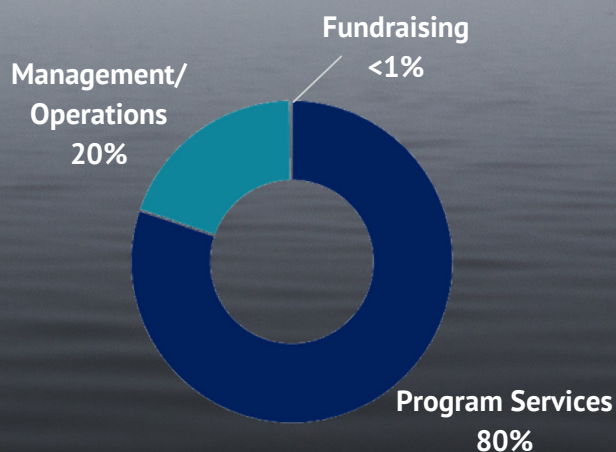
**pro bono hours
worth**

US \$5.5M

Support and Revenue



Expenses



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"If it weren't for PILnet, we would not be here."

*Global human rights organization and PILnet
Clearinghouse client*



PILnet.org

