PILnet is an international non-governmental organization that creates opportunities for social change by unlocking law’s full potential. With global programs and regional ones in Europe, Eurasia, and Asia, PILnet aims to reclaim and reimagine the role of law so that it works for the benefit of all. PILnet does this by building networks and collaborations of public and private sector lawyers who understand how law works when it serves the interests of the privileged and then it uses that knowledge to strengthen civil society and serve the world’s poor and vulnerable.

Over the last 20 years, PILnet has built extensive networks among public interest legal organizations and law firms that provide pro bono support. Today, PILnet keeps exploring new ways to merge these networks, utilizing the expertise of transactional lawyers to develop innovative of public interest projects, and then disseminating these new strategies through new and existing networks of these lawyers and PILnet Fellows who learn these new approaches by working alongside PILnet staff.

Since 2003, PILnet’s work in Asia has supported the creation of vibrant public interest legal networks, pro bono clearinghouses, and national and regional initiatives that educate and enrich current and future generations of public interest lawyers. In 2013, PILnet expanded its regional presence with an office in Hong Kong and launched a range of activities targeted at Asian lawyers and civil society advocates.

The Leitner Center for International Law and Justice at Fordham Law School is an innovative Think-and-Do Tank that aims to make international human rights protections an everyday reality for marginalized communities around the world. The Leitner Center provides education and training to law students, facilitates capacity building and advocacy with activists and grassroots groups around the world, and contributes to critical research among legal scholars in international human rights.
PILnet and the Leitner Center are launching their first Regional Course on Public Interest Lawyering for lawyers and representatives of NGOs in the Asian region. With this course, PILnet aims to create a channel for about 50 young public interest-minded lawyers to gain experience and an international perspective at the outset of their careers, and to build a network among them and other relevant groups in the field.

The five-week online course will consist of five interactive and interconnected sessions, which include sections for self-paced learning and live webinars/discussions. The course participants can access theory video presentations, resources, quizzes and live discussions with expert speakers, including case simulations and practical exercises. The course also encourages regional cooperation and development of creative ways to use the law for the public interest. The entire course is hosted using PILnet’s learning platform and integrated with Zoom.
Law school professors often tell arriving students that their job is to teach them to "think like lawyers." But by the time they leave law school, these students have usually only learned to think like a particular kind of lawyer--one that is ready to represent the interests of paying clients.

To represent the interests of society as a whole (in what is commonly called "justice") lawyers may need a different kind of thinking. To explore this idea, PILnet developed a course that is built around five core concepts critical to shaping the way public interest lawyers think.

These are:

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE;**
**PRO BONO PUBLICO;**
**STRATEGIC LITIGATION;**
**LEGAL EMPOWERMENT;**
**NEW DIRECTIONS IN PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERING.**
COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Increase knowledge about the history, current practices and applications of public interest lawyering to address unmet legal needs in society and contribute to broader social reforms.

- Enhance resources, tools and skills that can be used by NGOs, clearinghouses, and pro bono/PIL lawyers to increase their knowledge, effectiveness and resilience.

- Enable sharing of information, promotion of best practices, and collaboration among target audiences.
Access to Justice is a foundational concept for the way public interest lawyers think about their societies. This is because the problem of unmet legal needs means that law is not working for everyone and, as a result, that the legal systems may be treating some people unfairly or favoring the interests of some at the expense of others. Recognizing the problem is the first step for public interest lawyers in thinking of ways to address it.

A closely related concept is Pro Bono Publico, which calls to mind the responsibility of the legal profession in helping to address the unmet legal needs of society by acting for the public good. For the privilege of being able to practice law, all lawyers have a duty to help ensure that the legal system is not just serving the interests of paying clients. How far this duty goes and what it means in practice is viewed differently in various societies, and it is often in competition, or even conflict, with the commercial practice of law.

Because legal resources are often limited and legal aid insufficient, public interest lawyers have thought about ways to focus their efforts through the concept of Strategic Litigation. The idea is to select and litigate key cases that have the potential to effect change beyond the interests of a specific client. Perhaps because the express premise of this strategy is that some cases can have an impact that serves the public interest, it has become the best known form of public interest lawyering. But it is not the only or necessarily the best approach.

Another promising approach is Legal Empowerment, which addresses unmet legal needs by using low cost methods, like paralegals. Unlike litigation, which seeks to remedy problems after the fact, legal empowerment seeks to anticipate future problems by providing timely targeted advice that can prevent or mitigate potential harm. Whether this approach can be used strategically to effect broader change, is not yet well established.

Having examined four key concepts that shape the way public interest lawyers think, the course concludes with a reexamination of the concept of Public Interest Lawyering by looking at some new directions that are now being explored. Informed by social science research and new capabilities afforded by technology, some public interest lawyers are finding new ways to think about addressing the unmet legal needs in their societies.
What do we mean by A2J?
Procedural vs substantive justice
Legal needs assessments
Unequal access to resources/participation/power
How do we define the “problem”? 
Too little law/too few lawyers
Identification of systemic causes
Self-regulation/inadequate state support/others
What are the institutional approaches for addressing?
Legal aid: provision of legal assistance to those unable to afford lawyers
Right to counsel: Connection to equality before the law, right to counsel, right to a fair trial
State obligation: criminal and civil proceedings? (i.e. Civil Gideon)
Welfare (does access to justice include legal help accessing benefits?)
Simplify law
Deregulation of profession/non-licensed providers
SDG 16
Pro Bono Publico

- Where does pro bono come from and what does it mean?
- Most countries have tradition of volunteerism; “pro bono” as we know it is recent
- Is pro bono a professional obligation or a personal choice?
- Growth of larger units of practice/rise of Big Law
- Growth of NGO sector in need of resources
- Relation to legal aid/austerity
- What does pro bono look like?
- Individual services v. NGO rep v. social enterprise
- Civil/criminal
- Relationship to legal aid
- Who does pro bono and why?
- Variations in Big Law v. small-scale practitioners
- Law firms and the business of law
- CSR
- What role does the bar play?
- Role of the legal profession/Regulation of the legal profession
- Legal ethics
- Mandatory pro bono (examples from the region)
- What is the role of other professional actors?
- Legal education in service of social justice
- Clearinghouses
- Research/think tanks
- Rankings
Strategic Litigation

- What is strategic litigation and what makes it “strategic”?
- Investment of legal resources for systemic (social) change
- Root causes vs cause (rebellious) lawyering
- Client vs public interests (problems of standing)
- Strategic- vs rights- vs impact litigation
- Class actions and legal precedent
- What makes strategic litigation controversial or “political”?
- A check on power: democracy and rule of law
- Putting the system on trial
- Other thoughts to discuss:
- Why courts? Courts as arenas for struggle/variation based on judicial independence
- What is the purpose/goal? Direct v. indirect effects
- Litigation as a tactic v. strategy
- Who decides how to use litigation? Lawyers, funders, social movements
- Accountability and efficacy
Whose interests are served by the way that most law is being practiced today?
Consider public interest-minded critiques of the profit-focused fiduciary duties of directors and the emergence of new legal entities like benefit corporations and social enterprises.
Consider the impact of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (which shields social media companies from liability even when they profit from the dissemination of false or misleading information).
How does globalization exploit the lack of legal safeguards to protect the public interest?
Impact of foreign investment
Lack of accountability for multinationals
How is our deepening understanding of the complexity of systemic causes that perpetuate the problem of unmet legal needs prompting a search for more interdisciplinary approaches?
How can technology improve the way unmet legal needs are addressed?
Who needs the government or lawyers: do scientists have answers? (Harvard’s A2J Lab and randomized control trials)
What does it mean to say: “All law is public interest law”?
Law has the potential to serve the public interest, but it is a contested terrain.
Law enables collaborations that are transforming the world. Does this necessitate more shared problem solving responses to protect the public interest?
What is “movement lawyering”?
How does this form of legal assistance differ from legal empowerment?
How does it compare to the idea of “rebellious lawyering”?
Prof. Emeritus Vitit Muntarbhorn

Vitit Muntarbhorn is a Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He is a graduate of Oxford University (M.A., B.C.L. (Oxon.)) and Universite Libre de Bruxelles (Licence Speciale en Droit Europeen (Brux.)). He is also a Barrister at Law (the Middle Temple, London).

He has helped the UN in a variety of positions, including as: member of UN Secretary General's Civil Society Advisory Board on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse; member of Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, ILO; independent expert on UNESCO Advisory Board for Global Education Monitoring, representing the Asia-Pacific Region; member of Advisory Board, UN Human Security Fund; member of Advisory Board, UN Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation on Human Rights.

On human rights issues, he has held a number of UN posts, in particular the following: UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; UN Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. He was the Chairperson of the UN appointed Commission of Inquiry on the Ivory Coast (2011) and a member of the UN appointed Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2021 he was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council as UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.

He also helps civil society and was for several years Co-Chairperson of the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. He has published widely on International Law, Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law, and Law and Development. He is the recipient of a number of awards, including the 2004 UNESCO Human Rights Education Prize. He was bestowed a Knighthood (KBE) in 2018.
Sara Hossain is a barrister practicing in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, mainly in the areas of constitutional, public interest and family law. She is a partner at the law firm of Dr. Kamal Hossain and Associates, and serves pro bono as the Honorary Executive Director of the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust. She is a member of the Board of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and associated with several international civil society initiatives (the Advisory Board of the Open Society Justice Initiative, the Advisory Committee of the Women’s International Coalition on Gender Justice (WICG) the Bureau of South Asians for Human Rights, as and the International Commission on the Chittagong Hill Tracts). In 2016, Sara was appointed by the President of the UN Human Rights Council to serve as a member of the Group of Experts on Accountability in the DPRK, and from July 2018 to March 2019 as a member of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Gaza Protests of 2018. Sara also participated in the Task Force on Justice, convened by Pathfinders International, focusing on SDG 16.

Sara ran the South Asia Programme at INTERIGHTS from 1997 to 2003. She was a founding board member of the South Asia Women’s Fund (now the Women’s Fund Asia) and served as a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists.

Sara was educated at Wadham College, Oxford (MA (Hons) 1988), called to the Bar from Middle Temple (1989), enrolled in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh (1992) and then in the Appellate Division in 2008.

She has received awards from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (now Human Rights First), the US State Department (Women of Courage), ‘Ananya’ magazine and been selected as a World Economic Forum Fellow and an Asia 21 Fellow.
Zhang Wanhong earned his Ph.D. in Law from Wuhan University School of Law, Wuhan, China, where he now holds the position of Professor of Jurisprudence. He studies and teaches in the legal areas related to human rights, public interest and civil society. He is the pioneer of rights-based disability studies in China and founding editor-in-chief of Disability Rights Studies in China.

Professor Zhang is one of the drafters of China’s first National Human Rights Action Plan. He is the author and translator of a number of books, and has published articles in both international and Chinese journals. He is one of the founders and the Executive Director of Wuhan University Institute for Human Rights Studies. He was the Edwards Fellow (2005) at Columbia University School of Law, New York, USA, and was named as Columbia’s first Greater China Public Interest Fellow (2013). He had visiting positions at a number of academic institutes at home and aboard, among them, the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (Norway), Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Sweden), Danish Human Rights Institute (Denmark), Academia Sinica (Taiwan). He is Senior Research Fellow at the Netherlands China Law Centre, University of Amsterdam.

As the Director of Wuhan University Public Interest and Development Law Institute, Professor Zhang and his colleagues are actively working in the field of protection and promotion of human rights in China. He also serves as advisor to several international and domestic organizations. Recently, he was appointed as Chief Expert of the prestigious Wuhan University Institute of International Law.
Helena Whalen-Bridge

Helena Whalen-Bridge is Associate Professor of Law at the National University of Singapore. A recipient of multiple competitive research grants and the 2019 Teresa Godwin Phelps Award for Scholarship in Legal Communication, her research interests include legal ethics and access to justice, legal narrative, and legal education.

Publications in the field of access to justice include *The Role of Lawyers in Access to Justice: Asian and Comparative Perspectives* (CUP, forthcoming 2021), *Litigants in Person: Principles and Practice in Civil and Family Matters in Singapore*, with Jaclyn Neo (SAL Academy Publishing, 2021), “Automated Document Assembly: Access to Justice and Consumer Risk” (2020) *Singapore Academy of Law Journal*, and “The Conceptualisation of Pro Bono in Singapore” (2014) *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*. Helena received the NUS Teaching Excellence Award and is a longstanding member of the Law Faculty’s Teaching Excellence Committee. She is also an Expert with the UNODC’s Education for Justice project. Helena is a founding member of the Law Society of Singapore’s Project Law Help, which helps provide legal information and support to charities and social enterprises. She has been the Faculty Advisor for the Law Faculty’s student Pro Bono Group since its inception in 2005.
Tanguy Lim

Lim Tanguy was a practising lawyer for 12 years before joining the Law Society of Singapore in 2007 to set up and run its Pro Bono Services Office.

He served as the Law Society’s Director of Pro Bono Services until his appointment as Chief Executive Officer to the Law Society Pro Bono Services charity and Institution of Public Character in 2017. He is a passionate advocate for encouraging pro bono service by the legal profession.

A Tote Board scholar, Tanguy has had more than a decade of non-profit leadership experience in working with public-private-people partnerships to enhance access to justice in Singapore.
Tze-Wei Ng

Tze-wei is a Hong Kong-based lawyer with the private wealth team of international law firm Stephenson Harwood, with a focus on philanthropy and charity law, as well as ESG (environmental, social and governance).

She was formerly Deputy Director for Asia with PILnet, and led the setting up of the Hong Kong Pro Bono Clearinghouse and other regional pro bono efforts.

During this time she and team liaised with various law firms, law schools, bar associations, international organisations and NGOs around the region in designing innovative pro bono projects.

After returning to private practice, she remains active in her pro bono support to organisations serving marginalised communities. In recent years she's also been keenly exploring the role of lawyers in supporting the growing practice of social entrepreneurship, social finance, impact investing and responsible businesses etc.. She sees these as exciting new areas of public interest law - as doing good increasingly goes beyond charity and donations, and requires a mix of non-profit and for-profit tools and structures.

Outside the law firm she is board co-chair of Resolve Foundation, an NGO committed to supporting social justice advocates working towards a more equal and inclusive Hong Kong. She is also a board director of esela – The legal network for social impact, a global network of lawyers committed to creating a sustainable economy that balances financial return and social and environmental impact.

Patricia Ho

Patricia Ho is the Founder of Hong Kong Dignity Institute, Founding and Managing Partner of Patricia Ho & Associates and Principal Lecturer of the Faculty of Law at the University of Hong Kong. Much of her work involves defending the rights of minority groups in Hong Kong by way of seeking advancements and developments of government policies and laws through strategic litigation.

Patricia also provides legal and strategic advice to a number of NGOs in Hong Kong, and works with both local and international bodies to advocate for the rights of marginalised groups, including refugees, asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking.

In 2015, Patricia represented Mr. ZN to bring a judicial review - ZN v Secretary for Justice & Ors - to encourage the government to consider introducing specific legislations to criminalise forced labour and human trafficking. She has provided trainings and seminars to the legal community in Hong Kong on avenues to protect victims of human trafficking and forced labour, and is a co-author of the Crimes (Amendment) (Modern Slavery) Bill 2019 which has been introduced in Hong Kong Legislative Council. In June 2020, Patricia was recognised by the U.S. State Department as one of ten global Trafficking in Person (TIP) Report Heroes.

Patricia is trained in Post Trauma Psychosocial and Mental Health Interventions for the Refugee Population
Jinmei Liu

General Counsel, Friends of Nature  
Environmental Lawyer, China

Jinmei Liu works as the head of the law and policy project of Friends of Nature since 2018, and currently based in Beijing. Her current job focus on environmental public interest litigation, environmental legislation and policy advocacy. Jinmei has more than 10 years professional experience in China and South East Asia. She has worked with ClientEarth China Project as lawyer from 2017 to 2018 and focus on legal capacity building and legislation. Before ClientEarth, She has worked as the Mekong legal coordinator of Mekong Legal Program of EarthRights International in Thailand since 2015, focusing on Chinese overseas investment in Southeast Asia and South America. Before joining ERI, Jinmei worked with the Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims (CLAPV) for six years, which is China’s most established group of environmental lawyers, led by Prof. Wang Canfa. She worked as an environmental public interest lawyer representing pollution victims from communities across China.

刘金梅是自然之友环境法与政策项目负责人。IUCN全球环境法委员会青年学术委员会联席主席。刘金梅有十年以上的在中国和东南亚实践环境法的经验。她曾在中国政法大学污染受害者法律帮助中心（CLAPV）作为志愿律师提供多年的法律服务，而后服务于国际地球权益组织，在“一带一路”沿线的东南亚国家进行环境法的研究与实践，后担任欧洲环保协会（ClientEarth）中国项目律师，负责中国环境法项目，于2018年加入自然之友，负责自然之友的公益诉讼及环境政策倡导工作。
Dr. Pillkyu Hwang, Esq. is Executive Director at GongGam Human Rights Law Foundation and an adjunct professor in charge of the international human rights law clinic at Seoul National University (SNU) Law School. The main areas of his advocacy, research and field work include international human rights, migration, refugees, business and human rights, international adoptees, alternative child care, North Korean escapees, disaster and human rights, detention and human rights and access to justice in general both in Korea and Asia.

He graduated from SNU with an LL.B. and has earned his PhD in public international law at the same university. He was a visiting academic at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) of Oxford University in 2007, and a visiting fellow at the Human Rights Program of Harvard Law School in 2011-2012. He has been the Human Rights Committee coordinator of the Korean Bar Association (KBA) for 8 years and is now the chair of the KBA’s Special Committee on International Human Rights. He was a member of the Reform Committee within the National Human Rights Commission in 2017 and has been a President-nominated commissioner of the Special Commission on Social Disasters in Korea since 2018. He also has played a leading role in the Asian region, as the chair, in two major regional human rights networks, the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and the Asian Consortium for Human Rights Based Access to Justice (Hrba2j-Asia).
From 2008-2017, Marlon was the Coordinator of the Alternative Law Groups (ALG), a coalition of twenty (20) legal resource NGOs in the Philippines with distinct programs that are primarily concerned with the pursuit of public interest, respect for human rights, and promotion of social justice. He previously served as a civil society member of the Philippines’ Open Government Partnership (OGP) Steering Committee. From 2011 to 2015, he was the Vice-Chairperson for the Basic Sectors of the National Anti-Poverty Program.

Marlon J. Manuel
Senior Advisor to the Legal Empowerment Network, Namati

Marlon has more than two decades of experience in legal empowerment work, having devoted practically his entire career to social justice and human rights lawyering. He has combined grassroots education activities with active involvement in strategic litigation on human rights and public interest issues, policy reform work on social justice legislation, and justice system reform programs on improving access to justice.

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Haya Emaan Zahid

Haya Emaan Zahid is a Barrister-at-Law with more than 11 years of experience working as a legal empowerment professional.

She is nominated by the Government of Sindh as a legal expert for the Committee for the Welfare of Prisoners (a committee that has been providing legal aid, assistance and empowerment to prisoners in Sindh since establishment in 2004).

She has been working within the prison landscape both at the grass roots and policy and research level having made key contributions to reforming prison legislation in Sindh. Haya has worked as a special assistant/ co-opted member for federal government committees notified to improve the situation of prisoners across Pakistan.

Haya is a member of the Sindh Public Safety and Police Complaints Commission, National Commission on the Status of Women and Board Member of the Legal Aid and Justice Authority. She is a founding member of the Legal Aid Society where she started working in the role of a Project Director and is now the CEO.
Asinawati Ayub

Asinawati has been practising as a human rights lawyer since 2001. She dealt with human rights subject particularly on labour issues including migrant workers, religious freedom or belief, women and fair trial. She experienced as a lawyer at district court level to constitutional court including judicial review on religious defamation Law. After becoming a director of Jakarta Legal Aid Institute in 2006 – 2009, she is a chairperson of Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation for 2017-2021. After experiencing some litigation and policy advocacy she trusts more in organizing and educating to make changes.
Surya Deva

Surya Deva is a Professor at the Macquarie Law School, Sydney, and a member of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights. His primary research interests lie in business and human rights, India-China constitutional law and sustainable development. Prof Deva has published extensively in these areas, and has advised various UN bodies, governments, multinational corporations and civil society organisations on matters related to business and human rights.

He is one of the founding Editors-in-Chief of the Business and Human Rights Journal, and sits on the Editorial/Advisory Board of the Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights, the Vienna Journal on International Constitutional Law, the Indian Law Review, and the Australian Journal of Human Rights. He is an elected member of the Executive Committee of the International Association of Constitutional Law (2014-18; 2018-22).
COURSE PARTICIPANTS’ PROFILE AND REQUIREMENTS

Junior lawyers, recent law graduates, and NGO representatives interested in public interest law are welcome to apply to join the course. Applicants with a legal background and familiarity with public interest law in Asia will be given preference. The course will be fully delivered in English. The program will accept about 50 participants.

To ensure as much interaction as possible and fruitful discussions during the course, participants are expected to:

• be able to communicate in and understand English;
• attend at least 4 out of 5 sessions;
• be available to join each live session with their video on;
• actively participating in live discussions and non-live forums;
• complete the course assignment before the live sessions (including watching course videos, reading resource material, and take quizzes); and
• bring case studies or examples for discussions.