



2025

ANNUAL
REPORT

WHO WE ARE

PILnet protects civic space, addresses global challenges, and works to build just, equitable, and sustainable societies by mobilizing a global network of legal professionals to support nonprofit and community-led organizations, equipping public interest champions with innovative tools and strategies, and inspiring and training the next generation of public interest lawyers.

WHAT WE DO



PILnet is a global, locally present nonprofit dedicated to promoting social change and empowering civil society by making the law accessible to marginalized groups, people in vulnerable situations, and others who are unrepresented. Founded in 1997 at Columbia University, PILnet connects lawyers with nonprofit and community-led organizations, facilitating pro bono legal services while strengthening public interest law and building legal capacity for underserved communities. Operating as a matchmaking platform, PILnet pairs nonprofit organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and social enterprises with legal professionals and helps them define their legal needs. With a global presence—including offices in Budapest, Hong Kong and New York—PILnet has mobilized significant pro bono resources, facilitating legal services worth millions of dollars on the commercial market.

- Founded in 1997 at Columbia University
- Global presence — offices in Budapest, Hong Kong and New York
- Facilitating legal services worth millions of dollars



Beyond direct legal services, we deliver regular in-person capacity-building opportunities, webinars, and a wealth of resources that help CSOs build their resilience and protect the interests of their communities.



We are also a convener, connecting the global legal community with nonprofits to build stronger alliances among lawyers and advocates and smarter, more focused legal strategies to put the full power of law to work for civil society and the communities they serve.

- Capacity-building and webinars to strengthen civil society
- Power of law to work for civil society

PRO BONO

IN ACTION —

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

PILnet connects CSOs with law firms through its clearinghouses, serving as a matchmaking platform. A clearinghouse pairs CSOs, human rights defenders, and social enterprises with pro bono lawyers who provide high-quality legal assistance at no charge.

In 2025, PILnet received 469 unique legal requests, and we assisted more than 182 organizations in 225 distinct cases by engaging over 80 law firms and solo practitioners to provide direct legal services valued at approximately US\$9,284,215.

US\$9.28M

legal services value

469

unique legal requests

225

distinct cases

182+

organizations
assisted

80+

law firms and solo
practitioners

BELOW ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2025

ENSURING ACCESS TO FREE ADVANCE CARE PLANNING FOR HONG KONG SENIORS

Planning for end-of-life legal documents can spare families emotional and financial strain, but many low-income seniors cannot afford the necessary legal services. PILnet partnered with Hong Kong-based social enterprise AWEsum Care to connect pro bono lawyers with underserved seniors, supporting “witnessing days” where volunteers prepare and witness key documents such as wills, enduring powers of attorney, and advance directives. This collaboration not only provides practical assistance to seniors but also supports Hong Kong’s public policy efforts to promote end-of-life planning through the legal sector.



DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO BOARD FOR STATELESS PEOPLE, REFUGEES



Although stateless people, refugees, and asylum seekers may have valid travel documents and the legal right to enter a country, airlines often deny them boarding out of fear of immigration fines, effectively turning carriers into informal border enforcers. To address these wrongful denials, Apatride Network contacted PILnet, and we connected them with DLA Piper to research airline liability, compensation claims, and the policy gaps driving these practices. The initiative aims not only to challenge individual boarding denials but also to push for systemic reforms that protect the mobility rights of stateless communities across Europe.

FIGHTING DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION IN ARMENIA



In Armenia, PILnet connected the nonprofit organization Disability Rights Agenda with the international law firm Hogan Lovells who challenged a government list that automatically barred people with certain disabilities from practicing specific professions—including serving as judges. Together, they submitted an amicus brief grounded in international human rights law, reinforced by a powerful letter from Judge David S. Tatel, leading the court to rule in September 2025 that blanket bans are unconstitutional. The decision marks a significant step toward dismantling disability-based discrimination and affirming the right of people with disabilities to choose their professions.

INCREASING ACCESS TO PRO BONO FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AT THE FIRST US REFUGEE RIGHTS PITCHING ROUNDTABLE

A dark blue background in the top right corner features several orange geometric shapes: a large curved line, a small circle, a larger circle, and another small circle, all partially visible and overlapping the edge of the frame.

The U.S. has one of the most developed pro bono cultures in the world, yet many refugee-serving organizations—particularly those led by displaced or stateless people and other community-based groups—struggle to access it. PILnet's pro bono pitching roundtables create a platform for refugee rights organizations to access legal expertise that would otherwise be out of reach. Nonprofits present concrete pro bono project ideas directly to law firms, followed by facilitated discussion between pitching organizations and legal professionals. In October 2025, PILnet partnered with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, HIAS, and Thomson Reuters Foundation to host the first Refugee Rights Pro Bono Pitching Roundtables in the U.S., building on successful editions in Asia (2020 and 2022) and the UK and Europe (2024).

Designed to deepen PILnet's network and programming in the U.S., the Roundtables served as a launchpad for longer-term engagement in the area of displacement and statelessness. Across two sessions, 16 organizations pitched 21 projects spanning a wide range of legal needs: from organizational support for refugee rights organizations to collaborative programmatic work, including country of origin research and direct assistance to challenge detention, secure nationality, and obtain protection for refugees. Half of the pitching organizations were led by people with lived experience of displacement or statelessness, and 90% had never previously engaged with PILnet. With strong law firm interest and many projects already matched, the Roundtables demonstrated the model's adaptability and its power to connect organizations outside traditional pro bono networks with the legal support they need.



CONVENING THE
PRO BONO COMMUNITY
AT THE RENOWNED
PILNET
GLOBAL
FORUM



PILNET GLOBAL FORUM, ROME 2025

At the 2025 Global Forum in Rome, PILnet convened more than 400 in-person and 45 online participants from across the world, reaffirming its role as a leading global convener of the pro bono and public interest law community. Guided by the theme Amplifying Impact: Pro Bono & Public Interest Law in a Shifting World, the Forum created a space for lawyers, CSOs, and advocates to collectively examine how pro bono is adapting to political, social, and environmental upheaval.

Across three days of interactive sessions, participants explored new legal pathways for displaced people, collaborations for climate justice, and emerging trends shaping the future of the field, while emphasizing flexibility, long-term partnership, and structural innovation as core strategies. Through dynamic platforms such as the CSO Marketplace of Ideas and the Pro Bono in Action Pitching Session, PILnet actively facilitated connections between organizations and legal professionals, turning dialogue into tangible collaboration. The gathering concluded with celebratory and community-building events—including an Awards Dinner and a participant-led fundraiser—underscoring how PILnet not only connects a global network but also strengthens solidarity and shared purpose across the movement.



PILNET GLOBAL FORUM, ROME 2025

400+
IN-PERSON

45
ONLINE

STRENGTHENING

CIVIL SOCIETY RESILIENCE IN

AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA, AND THE US

While PILnet experienced significant growth globally in 2025—with an overall increase in cases matched by 16%—three regions where our work is relatively new saw the highest increases. We saw a 60% increase in overall matters in Latin America, a 137% increase in the United States, and a 233% increase in Africa over 2024.

+137%
UNITED STATES

+233%
AFRICA

+60%
LATIN AMERICA



LATIN AMERICAN REGIONAL CONVENING, 2025

CONVENING PRO BONO AND PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERS IN **LATIN AMERICA**

In March 2025, PILnet hosted its first-ever Latin America Convening in Lima, Peru, marking an important milestone in the expansion of our global network. This bilingual gathering brought together pro bono leaders from law firms, in-house counsel, nonprofits, and academia to exchange insights, address shared challenges, and identify innovative approaches to strengthening access to justice across the region.

The convening fostered a dynamic space for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning, connecting regional expertise with global perspectives. By facilitating cross-regional exchange, PILnet not only deepened partnerships within Latin America but also amplified lessons from the region to inform and enrich its work worldwide.



LATIN AMERICAN REGIONAL CONVENING, 2025

CONVENING PRO BONO AND PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERS IN **AFRICA**

In September 2025, PILnet also held its first Convening in Africa. The Regional Convening on Pro Bono and Public Interest Law in Africa, organized by PILnet as part of Pro Bono Week in partnership with the Lagos Public Interest Law Partnership (LPILP), brought fresh energy and momentum to the region's pro bono community. The event created a dynamic platform for lawyers, civil society leaders, and other justice stakeholders to exchange bold ideas and practical strategies to advance social change and safeguard civic space across Africa.

Designed to spark sustained regional dialogue, the convening focused on strengthening partnerships between the legal sector and civil society to tackle urgent challenges. Engaging panels, fireside conversations, and vibrant networking sessions highlighted lessons from impactful initiatives and ignited new collaborations. Participants from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Rwanda—spanning civil society, law firms, academia, bar associations, and government agencies—came together with a shared commitment to expanding access to justice and deepening collective impact across the continent.



PARTICIPANTS CONNECT AT THE AFRICA REGIONAL CONVENING, SEPTEMBER 2025.

GROWING THE AFRICA CLEARINGHOUSE AND EXPANDING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRO BONO AFRICAN LAWYERS

Between January and November 2025, PILnet received 20 Africa-related Clearinghouse matters—a sharp increase from just six between September and December 2024. In May 2025, PILnet hosted an introductory Clearinghouse webinar for CSOs, drawing more than 65 participants and generating strong engagement, including nine new legal requests from Africa-based organizations immediately afterward.

In July, PILnet delivered a three-part virtual training series for African lawyers and law firms on building effective pro bono practices and advancing strategic public interest litigation, facilitated by Baker McKenzie.

LAUNCHING THE LEGAL HEALTH CHECK PROGRAM IN **THE UNITED STATES**

The Legal Health Check service was successfully launched in the United States as a preventive tool to help nonprofit organizations identify and address legal risks. By the end of September 2025, twenty David and Lucile Packard Foundation grantees (who were served as part of a partnership with the foundation) had been onboarded into the program. We were able to match 100% of the organizations that completed the process with legal support. Each participating nonprofit was matched with a dedicated pro bono team of approximately five attorneys, supervised by partners from leading law firms and major corporations.

Several teams extended their support beyond the initial assessment, helping resolve identified issues and building longer-term pro bono relationships. Analysis of the Legal Health Checks and the extended legal support received revealed common areas of need, including employment contract review, AI policy development, governance document review, and compliance with 501(c)(3) lobbying restrictions.

DEEPENING PRO BONO CULTURE ACROSS **EUROPE**

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERS IN EURASIA

In August 2025, more than 40 law students from five countries gathered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, for a four-day regional legal ethics workshop organized by PILnet in partnership with White & Case and Tashkent State University of Law. Through interactive exercises and expert-led sessions, participants explored practical ethical challenges, including confidentiality, conflicts of interest, anti-corruption, pro bono, and business and human rights. The workshop emphasized real-world application and the importance of ethical leadership in strengthening an independent and principled legal profession across the region.



STRENGTHENING GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS EUROPE

PILnet and Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE) partnered from 2023-2025 on the MARIO (Minorities, Accountability Rights, Independence, Organisational Development) Project to build a supportive environment for grassroots CSOs working in the space of minority rights in the framework of the promotion and protection of EU values across Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Latvia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovenia.

PILnet held its final central MARIO training in Budapest in 2025, equipping grassroots civil society organizations across the EU with the tools to advance minority rights and strengthen underrepresented voices at local, national, and European levels. This year's three-day training gathered 30 organizations from six countries, alongside experts from PILnet, MRGE, and Hintalovon, offering sessions on EU institutions, legislative processes, legal mechanisms, and safeguarding. Participants also engaged in community visits in Budapest and collaborative discussions focused on resilience, peer learning, and cross-border knowledge sharing.

Over three years, the initiative supported 90 minority rights organizations through specialized EU law training, tailored legal resources like the MARIO Manual, legal needs mapping, and pro bono assistance. It also enabled PILnet to expand pro bono networks across 11 EU countries and develop more strategic, responsive legal support through initiatives.

ENABLING LEGAL EMPOWERMENT OF CSOS

The German Marshal Fund's Proteus-funded project, Enabling Legal Empowerment of CSOs, aimed to promote legal pro bono, enhance legal resilience, and empower CSOs in Hungary, Croatia, and Bulgaria to better understand and navigate legal risks. PILnet delivered tailored legal support, practical legal resources, and capacity-building opportunities for CSOs, while strengthening networks of legal assistance through pro bono brokerages. The promotion of PILnet's clearinghouse services was a central component of the project, connecting CSOs with pro bono lawyers and fostering a more structured culture of volunteer legal support.

Under this project, in April 2025, PILnet brought the energy of pro bono to Szeged, Hungary, with a dynamic event hosted at the Szeged Bar Association. In partnership with the Szeged Bar Association—and with the support of Dr. Balázs Hoffman, recipient of the Pro Bono Lawyer of 2024 award presented by the Hungarian Bar Association and PILnet—the event drew an enthusiastic crowd of local lawyers and CSO representatives. Participants took part in a lively Pro Bono 101 training, exchanged real-world experiences, and explored how the Hungarian clearinghouse can connect legal expertise with urgent community needs. The impact was immediate: within weeks, one CSO submitted an urgent request that was successfully matched with a pro bono lawyer—powerful proof that promoting pro bono sparks real, tangible change.



ENSURING STRENGTH AND RESILIENCY FOR THE FUTURE IN **ASIA**

SUPPORTING SOCIAL PURPOSE ORGANIZATIONS

PILnet created a legal health assessment service for social purpose organizations (SPOs) in Hong Kong in 2021, which has been steadily growing since. This assessment aims to help SPOs identify the existing and potential legal issues and operational risks in the organization and create a plan to address them, allowing them to enhance their governance, compliance, and resilience in the long term.

In 2025, PILnet initiated 15 Legal Health Checks and completed 9 by the end of 2025. After SPOs completed the service and received their Legal Health Check report, PILnet has provided them with ongoing guidance and further resources—including matching them with pro bono lawyers—to support them in taking concrete action to address the risks identified.

To highlight the impact of this service, PILnet produced six video testimonials (three in Chinese and three in English) from interviewing SPO leaders who have completed a Legal Health Check.

In addition to providing the core Legal Health Check service, PILnet has partnered up with pro bono lawyers and tax professionals to create useful resources that are tailored for SPOs in Hong Kong. This includes a template non-disclosure agreement, a guide on charitable tax exemption and related compliance matters, and an employment manual for SPOs, all of which are available in English and Chinese. PILnet also hosted three events in 2025 in order to raise awareness on the importance of legal health and resilience, which were attended by a total of over 30 SPO representatives.

MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION IN HONG KONG

PILnet nurtures the next generation of lawyers in Hong Kong through its mentorship program. The Hong Kong Mentorship Program, sponsored by the WYNG Foundation, offers valuable guidance from experienced legal professionals who are engaged specifically with pro bono and public interest law. Since its inception in 2023, we have had 82 mentees and 78 mentors.

In 2025, PILnet held two rounds of the mentorship program. These rounds of the program expanded in both scale and programming between March 2025 and February 2026. The fourth round (March–June 2025) included 15 mentors and 15 mentees and featured a mid-point sharing event with guest speakers from Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and Justice Centre Hong Kong.

The fifth round (September 2025–February 2026) grew to 20 mentors and 20 mentees and followed a similar structure, with a mid-point sharing event featuring speakers from Patricia Ho & Associates, Equal Justice, and HELP for Domestic Workers. A new addition to the fifth round was a Legal Training Workshop led by Kay Chan, Barrister-at-law, who shared insights from his career and guided participants through a practical case study on a suspected human trafficking case, offering hands-on exposure to real-world legal issues.



ICE BREAKERS AT THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW MENTORSHIP PROGRAM, HONG KONG

ENSURING ACCESS TO THE **LAW** FOR DISPLACED AND **STATELESS** **PEOPLE** ACROSS THE **GLOBE**

“The Global Legal Community Pledge builds essential bridges across the legal ecosystem to strengthen access to justice for displaced and stateless people at a time when needs are surging, and resources are contracting. This transformative initiative exemplifies the power of cross-sectoral and diverse partnerships and demonstrates what becomes possible when the global legal community unites around shared purpose. We are deeply grateful for the legal community’s efforts in both empowering displaced and stateless people and providing essential legal support. Especially during the ongoing funding crisis impacting legal assistance provision, the community has not only honored its commitments but exceeded them by over 50%—a remarkable achievement amid severe financial constraints. The Pledge’s model of collective action and sustained commitment has never been more critical—or more urgently needed.”

MS. RUVENDRINI MENIKDIWELA,
assistant high commissioner for protection
UNHCR

ADVANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR DISPLACED AND STATELESS PEOPLE AT THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PROGRESS REVIEW

Now in its fifth year, the PILnet-coordinated Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Legal Community Pledge (the Pledge) has solidified its standing as a transformative collective initiative. It unites the legal profession and nonprofit organizations to expand access to justice, rights, and solutions for displaced and stateless populations. Throughout 2025, the Pledge addressed an urgent need for connection amongst Pledge members in the face of severe funding shortages and restrictive policies for displaced and stateless people. By creating dedicated spaces for information sharing, including establishing “Monthly Exchanges,” we fostered the collaboration necessary to navigate these challenges.



PILNET PLEDGE DELEGATION TO GENEVA. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PROGRAM OFFICER YUSRA HERZI, BOARD MEMBER AWMAIMA AMRAYAF, FORCED DISPLACEMENT PROGRAM DIRECTOR JASMINE SIMPERINGHAM.

In December 2025, PILnet led a diverse Pledge delegation to Geneva to contribute to the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review, a global convening to mark the midway point between the second GRF in 2023 and the third GRF to be held in 2027. PILnet amplified the critical role of legal assistance and advocacy in responses to displacement and statelessness, representing the legal community across plenary sessions, side events, and direct support activities. PILnet coordinated several key outputs to demonstrate the importance of legal assistance and the Pledge's impact, including a comprehensive 2023-2025 Pledge Progress Report and a Joint Statement co-drafted and endorsed by Pledge members. These initiatives, supported by a new video, spotlighted the tangible achievements of the Pledge and the unified message of Pledge members that legal assistance and advocacy should be a central component of robust responses to displacement and statelessness.



PARTNERING TO ADVANCE ACCESS TO LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEE-LED ORGANIZATIONS IN ASIA

PILnet partnered with the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR) to adapt and pilot PILnet's Legal Health Check model to support refugee-led organizations in Asia Pacific to strengthen the legal preparedness and organisational resilience. PILnet provided technical legal expertise and coordination with pro bono legal actors, while APNOR led engagement with refugee-led organizations and ensured that refugee leadership shaped both the design and delivery of the project throughout. Central to the initiative was the integration of meaningful refugee participation, the principle that refugees should actively shape the decisions and processes that affect their lives, not just be consulted as beneficiaries. This aligns with PILnet's broader conviction that people with lived experience should drive how public interest and pro bono support is designed and delivered. Through co-design workshops, one-on-one consultations, and meaningful refugee participation training for pro bono lawyers, the project actively shifted away from traditional top-down legal assistance models towards approaches where refugee-led organisations shape priorities, identify legal needs, and influence how support is delivered.

The project, piloted in Malaysia and New Zealand, reached 30 refugee-led organizations through legal awareness workshops, outreach, and direct engagement, with several refugee-led organizations completing the full legal health check process and receiving tailored legal assessments and co-designing action plans. Members of the legal community in both Malaysia and New Zealand also benefited from training on meaningful refugee participation and deepened their capacity to work in genuine partnership with refugee-led organisations, adopting more participatory and inclusive practices. The initiative demonstrated how pro bono legal support can be reimaged through refugee leadership and meaningful participation, offering a replicable model for collaboration between the legal sector and community-led movements.

2025 FINANCIAL POSITION



TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE US\$ 2,573,194

TOTAL EXPENSES US\$ 2,902,986

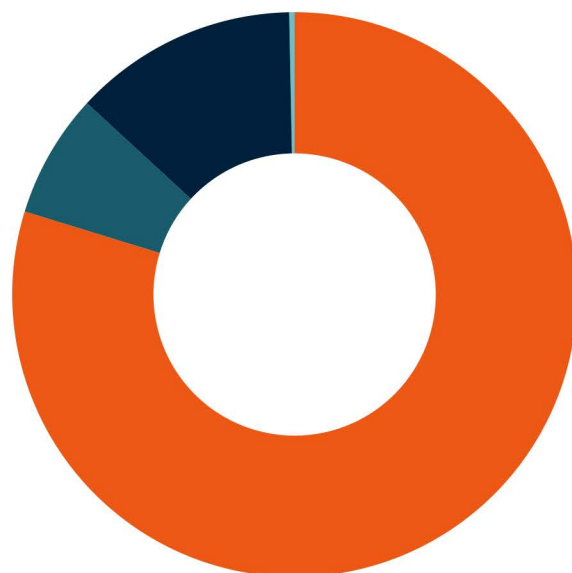
NET CHANGES IN ASSETS US\$ 329,792

NET ASSETS (BEGINNING) US\$ 2,449,043

NET ASSETS (ENDING) US\$ 2,119,251

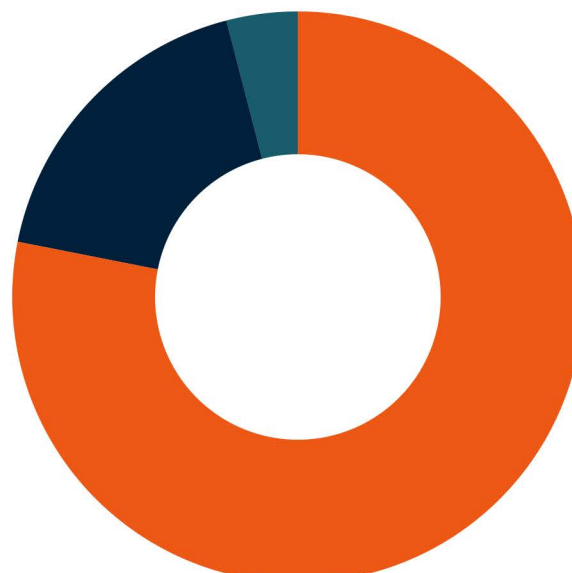
SUPPORT AND REVENUE PERCENTAGES

- GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS 79.75%
- CONFERENCE FEE INCOME 7.10%
- IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS 12.84%
- INTEREST AND OTHER INCOME 0.31%



OPERATING EXPENSES PERCENTAGES

- PROGRAM SERVICES US\$ 2,267,302
- MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL US\$ 518,617
- FUNDRAISING. US\$ 117,067



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