

## ISLP THINK PIECE OCT 2017: A Baker's Dozen: How Law Firms Could Enhance their Impact on International Development Goals

Pro Bono Legal work provided by international law firms can make a huge difference to development issues. Their commitment is typically longer term and without some of the restrictions of typical funders. The lawyers are able to draw on their expertise in some of the more complex areas of legal work. Law firms are independent, have high level connections and most importantly perhaps, they're agile; they can mobilize responses to clients very quickly and efficiently.

### The Baker's Dozen:

- **Don't be afraid to take the plunge.** Most really great projects take time to develop. Look at what you do already- can you scale up? Could you apply what you've learnt in one region or in one area and apply it to a new one?
- **Get a Champion.** If you are aiming to do something bigger or longer term than usual this will really help in dealing with issues e.g. potential conflicts.
- **Establish what you are trying to achieve.** Then keep coming back and refining what this is and how you plan to execute, how you are delivering and what results you are using to measure success.
- **Asses your strengths.** Identify if you should collaborate to fill gaps in your knowledge in order to make a more impactful intervention. An organization with experience or contacts in country may help you make better connections.
- **Ensure the process is demand led.** But ask yourself 'Is the ask really addressing the need?'
- **Ask around for reviews of your potential partner.** Then be clear, do they and others in the same field agree about the underlying key need? Be prepared for a constructive difference of opinions.
- **How can you best help?** Is pro bono advice sufficient? Invest in your relationships e.g. NGOs may need some financial assistance too.
- **With your proposed solution, be clear about your assumptions.** Sometimes political barriers or a partner's capacity to receive assistance might reduce effectiveness.
- **Plan for flexibility.** Adapt your model as you go and be prepared for some friction.
- **Assume some failure!** Not everything will work but be honest and learn from it.
- **Assume it will take time.** Big changes don't happen overnight.
- **Monitor and evaluate your impact.** Measure your success and choose a model that is proportionate.
- **Share what you have learnt!**

For more information please email [shazledine@islp.org](mailto:shazledine@islp.org). This advice was originally shared at the 2017 PILnet Global Forum at a panel discussion involving Catherine Flew (ROLE UK), Joanna Whiteman (Equal Rights Trust), Tom Dunn (Clifford Chance), Rebecca Perlman (Herbert Smith Freehills/ African Commercial Law Foundation) and various audience members.