



Pro Bono Partner Views: Kaoru Umino

Pro Bono Update

29 MAY 2019

Q: What pro bono experience has been most meaningful to you and why?

I have been involved in a number of pro bono projects focused on combatting human trafficking in Asia, including Japan. These projects have involved research and analysis of local laws and regulations relating to human trafficking and identification of gaps between such laws and regulations and international standards as well as actions required effectively to address human trafficking, which can be a complex, multi-jurisdictional effort. These projects have confirmed to me the critical importance of strong and sound legal systems to protect some of the most vulnerable people and how much more needs to be done both internationally and locally to ensure that the principles that these legal systems seek to uphold are realized in practice so as to make a concrete and positive difference in the lives of such people.

Q: What skills have you learned from your pro bono work that have been invaluable in your professional development?

As professionals working in a privileged environment, we often forget that even what may seem to us like simple legal tasks can make a big difference for people and organizations that do not have ready access to legal services. In addition, as so much of our day-to-day work tends to involve complex cases and transactions with multiple stakeholders, it is sometimes difficult to see if the work that we do makes a positive difference. Pro bono work has been an important reminder in my professional development that we can make valuable contributions to society and the lives of many people through our legal service, and this awareness of our ability to contribute helps me strive for excellence in the service that I provide to all of our clients.

Q: How is pro bono important to our firm's culture and values?

Being supportive -- making positive contributions to our local and global communities -- is a core component of DLA Piper's culture and values. We are fortunate to have the resources of a global law firm with lawyers in more than 40 countries to support the diverse needs of our clients worldwide. At the same time, our ability to do so successfully is dependent on the support that we enjoy in the communities where we operate and their commitment to the rule of law. For example, DLA Piper is able to advise clients on their investments and operations in Africa through DLA Piper Africa's offices in 20 countries across the continent. Many of these locations require long-term commitment and effort to protect and promote access to justice, social and economic development and sound legal institutions, all of which are necessary for our firm to operate successfully. One way that DLA Piper seeks to contribute to this effort is through our New Perimeter programs through which we harness the skills and talents of DLA Piper lawyers to provide long-term pro bono legal assistance in under-served regions around the world.