

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Cameroon¹

I. Introduction

The provision of pro bono legal services in Cameroon is not commonplace as part of the legal tradition in Cameroon and there are no legal instruments regulating pro bono legal services in Cameroon. However, there is an unmet need for pro bono legal services (and legal aid) in Cameroon, especially for socially disadvantaged citizens and people living with disabilities.

II. Overview of Pro Bono Practices

(a)	Professional Regulation	
	<p>1. Describe the laws/rules that regulate the provision of legal services?</p>	<p>In Cameroon, the legal profession is regulated by law number 90/059 of 19th December 1990 which organizes legal practices at the Bar (the “Law”) and the Internal Regulations of the Cameroon Bar implemented by order number 41/DPJ/SG/MJ of 12th April 2005 of the Minister in charge of Justice (the “Internal Regulations”).²</p> <p>Broadly, the Law and the Internal Regulations set out the conditions required to become a lawyer in Cameroon, as well as the rules of the Cameroon Bar Association, the procedural rules for disciplinary proceedings and ethical standards which apply to all Cameroon registered lawyers.</p>
	<p>2. Describe any licensure requirements governing the provision of legal services.</p>	<p>The provision of legal services is not limited to lawyers. However, Article 2 of the Law gives the monopoly of representing the parties before the law courts to advocates. Again, Article 3 states that parties may be assisted or represented by any other representative of their choice, where, in the jurisdiction of the court to which the cause has been referred, there are less than four chambers.</p> <p>To become a lawyer in Cameroon, the following conditions of Article 5 the Law must be satisfied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cameroonian nationality; • The lawyer must be 23 years or older; • LLB qualification or equivalent; • Obtain the “certificate of proficiency to practice at the Bar”; • Passage of the swearing in ceremony by the bar association;

¹ This chapter was drafted with the support of Patrick Libam Moutngui of Jing & Partners.

² See <https://barreaucameroun.org/fr/> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of adequate office premises, as approved by the Cameroon Bar Association; • Proof of professional indemnity insurance; and • Enrolment in the bar register.
(b)	Pro Bono Practice and Culture	
	<p>1. Describe the rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services e.g. any explicit regulation or limitation on providing free legal services in some or all contexts, details of any mandatory or minimum fees imposed on provision of legal services.</p>	<p>There are no rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services in Cameroon.</p> <p>However, law number 2009/004 of 14th April 2009 which relates to the provision of legal aid in Cameroon (“Law on Legal Aid”) contains some provisions to legally assist persons whose resources are inadequate to have their rights enforced by a court or to follow up the enforcement of any writ or process of execution previously obtained without such legal aid.</p> <p>Article 26 of Law on Legal Aid provides that the advocates designated to lend their services to the beneficiary of legal aid shall be appointed from among those practicing within the jurisdiction of the court before which the case was brought or the place of execution of the decision or measure. In case of failure to appear or refusal by the advocate, he shall be replaced by the President of the Bar Association. Article 38 adds that those appointed advocates shall be entitled to reimbursement of expenses incurred in defense of the person who has received legal aid and shall, where applicable, receive travelling and lodging allowance. They shall also be paid a hearing allowance whose amount shall be fixed each judicial year by the Minister in charge of justice.</p>
	<p>2. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?</p>	<p>Lawyers in Cameroon are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours.</p>
	<p>3. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers?</p>	<p>Aspiring lawyers in Cameroon are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers.</p>
	<p>4. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for the provision of pro bono legal services? What are the major unmet legal needs?</p>	<p>Cameroon has major unmet needs for the provision of legal services. 40% of the population lives below the poverty line, meaning that there is a huge</p>

		<p>demand for legal services provided on a pro bono (or legal aid) basis.³</p> <p>The main areas of law which require or present opportunities for the provision of pro bono legal services in Cameroon are: (i) human rights law; (ii) criminal procedure (a majority of Cameroon’s prisoners are awaiting trial); (iii) criminal defense, including defending men accused of being in homosexual relationships; (iv) child protection; (v) immigration law (Cameroon hosts nearly 100,000 asylum seekers and refugees); and (vi) equality for women.</p>
	<p>5. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services? e.g., NGOs, governmental or other public services, schools and universities, private law firms (local or international) or corporate organizations?</p>	<p>NGOs play a prominent role in providing pro bono legal services in Cameroon for refugees and homosexuals.⁴ These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFVMC - <i>Association Aide aux Familles et Victimes des Migrations Clandestines</i> which helps refugees;⁵ • Refugees Welfare Association (REWAC) Cameroon which helps refugees;⁶ • Women Poverty Eradication Centre (WOPEC) Cameroon which helps women in poverty;⁷ and • Contra Nocendi which works with persons held in pre-trial detention.⁸ <p>Some local law firms in Cameroon, such as Citadel,⁹ provide pro bono legal services however, Reuters reports that few local law private law firms in Cameroon are prepared to work on a pro bono basis.¹⁰ Some international firms such as Sidley Austin have also engaged in pro bono work in Cameroon.¹¹</p>
<p>(c) Obstacles to Provision of Pro Bono Legal Services</p>		
	<p>1. Do lawyers require a license to provide pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>Lawyers in Cameroon do not require a license to provide pro bono legal services.</p>

³ See <http://news.trust.org/item/20101116153900-pni7r> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

⁴ See <http://www.refugeelaidinformation.org/cameroon-pro-bono-directory> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

⁵ See <http://afvmc.free.fr/> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

⁶ See <http://www.freetocharities.org.uk/rewac> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

⁷ See <http://www.freetocharities.org.uk/wopec> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

⁸ See <http://contranocendi.org/index.php/en/our-projects/cameroon> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

⁹ See <https://citadellawfirm.cm/probono/> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

¹⁰ See <http://news.trust.org/item/20101116153900-pni7r> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

¹¹ See <https://www.sidley.com/en/probonolanding/sidley-emerging-enterprises-pro-bono-program/projects/grassland-cameroon> (last visited on October 2, 2019).

	2. Do foreign lawyers require any additional license(s) to provide pro bono legal services?	Foreign lawyers in Cameroon do not require any additional license(s) to provide pro bono legal services.
	3. Do lawyers require professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services that they provide? If so, are they prohibited from working under the cover of another pro bono provider, such as a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?	Lawyers in Cameroon do not require professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services that they provide.
	4. Are there any rules that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	There are no rules in Cameroon that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients.
	5. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	“Continuing Legal Education” or equivalent credit are not recognized in Cameroon.
(d)	Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts	
	1. Describe any governmental sources of pro bono and/or other legal services in Cameroon.	There are no governmental sources of pro bono and/or other legal services in Cameroon.
	2. Describe the main non-governmental sources of pro bono and/or other pro bono resources in Cameroon.	Please refer to II.(b).5 above.
	3. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign attorney can register in order to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?	There is no public or private organization in Cameroon with which a local or foreign attorney can register in order to be made aware of pro bono opportunities.

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