



Increasing Access

A brighter future for girls in rural Tanzania

The impact of our partnership with Amref Health Africa three years on

The growing need for free legal advice

How A&O is plugging some of the gaps left by cuts to legal aid

Ten questions for...

Beilqes Alzawm, human rights advisor, refugee and assistant in A&O's Corporate practice

A weekend school for under-privileged children in Belgium

ALLEN & OVERY



04

WHEN WE ACT TOGETHER, WE CAN DO SO MUCH

Introduction by Wim Dejonghe

06

NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

09

FIRST CASE BROUGHT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH SUDAN FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

10

THE GROWING NEED FOR FREE LEGAL ADVICE

16

THE WEEKEND SCHOOL FOR UNDER-PRIVILEGED CHILDREN IN BRUSSELS

20

SYSTEMIC CHANGE IN RURAL TANZANIA

The impact of our partnership with Amref Health Africa

26

TEN QUESTIONS FOR... BEILQES ALZAWM


28

ENDING INSTITUTIONALISED CARE FOR CHILDREN

Our partnership with Hope and Homes for Children

◀ SARAH, AN IN-SCHOOL PEER EDUCATOR AT KWAMATUKU SECONDARY SCHOOL, HANDENI, TANZANIA

FRONT COVER IMAGE:
GRADUATES OF AMREF HEALTH AFRICA'S ALTERNATIVE RIGHTS OF PASSAGE PROGRAMME, HANDENI, TANZANIA.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SAM VOX.



“There is so much need in the world and every individual effort makes an impact. When we bring together all that we have to offer, we can achieve so much.”

Wim Dejonghe, Senior Partner

When we act together, we can do so much...

I learned a very powerful lesson early on about the social contribution a firm like A&O can make.

Back in the 1990s, a fellow partner in Brussels lost his young daughter in a road traffic accident.

In response to that awful tragedy, and as a way to process his grief, he created a charity to promote road safety for children. We helped him to set up Child Focus, providing organisational support, office space and laptops, eventually enabling him to work on the initiative full-time.

Child Focus grew to become a highly influential voice in Belgian policymaking and later broadened its scope to form part of a European child protection network – Missing Children Europe.

That showed me how, with practical support from an organisation like ours, one person's vision can become a significant agent for change.

We've gone on to do some important pro bono work across multiple offices for Missing Children Europe, helping to create a financial coalition supported by the European Commission to tackle online child exploitation. The work has broadened to Asia Pacific and continues today.

From those early experiences in Brussels to the role I'm in now, I've seen so many examples of what we can achieve when we pool our skills and resources.

Each contribution we make as individuals has an impact – you need only look at the work lawyers like Robin Marshall (see [page 14](#)), Niels De Waele ([page 16](#)) and Maeve Hanna ([page 8](#)) are doing to change people's lives.

◀ **WIM IN HANDENI, TANZANIA, WITH AMREF HEALTH AFRICA IN SEPTEMBER 2016**

GLOBAL ISSUES

And so many social issues are global and cross-border now – displaced people, human trafficking, the use of evidence obtained by torture – all issues we've devoted significant pro bono time to recently. So one of the most powerful things we can bring to charities and non-profit organisations is our international network of lawyers and support professionals.

We did this to great effect with our charity partner from 2014-2016, Amref Health Africa. Not only did we raise a record amount of money globally, but 30 lawyers and support professionals worked together on a toolkit and training programme covering legal advocacy and communication strategies, which made the impact of our support last far beyond the life of the partnership (read more about what we achieved in Tanzania on [page 20](#)).

I hope we can have a similar impact with our current global charity partner, Hope and Homes for Children. Our focus is on ending the institutionalisation of children – the scale of which is enormous across the world. When you talk about closing orphanages, people react with shock because they assume them to be safe sanctuaries for vulnerable children – but the reality is quite different. (Read more on [page 29](#) and in the last issue of [Increasing Access](#).)

So in addition to fundraising and pro bono support, we have a responsibility across our international network to help raise awareness about this – both with our own people and by influencing other organisations we work with. This is one of Hope and Homes for Children's key aims.



WIM WITH AMREF HEALTH AFRICA PROJECT MANAGER, NYERERE JACKSON

WE CAN ACHIEVE SO MUCH

Our pro bono and community investment programme has come a long way since I was a partner in Brussels in the 90s – it is part of the fabric of the firm now. But I think people don't always realise just how valuable their skills and contributions can be for charities and vulnerable people. There is so much need in the world and every individual effort makes an impact. When we bring together all that we have to offer, we can achieve so much.



Wim Dejonghe

Senior Partner – Global

Tel +44 20 3088 2270

wim.dejonghe@allenoverly.com



News from the network

CHILDREN AT WAR CHILD'S CENTRE
IN EMIRATI CAMP, JORDAN

A&O WINS TOP AWARD FOR GLOBAL CHARITY PARTNERSHIP WITH WAR CHILD

A&O's two-year partnership with War Child has won the award for 'Best Charity Partnership – Legal' at the Business Charity Awards in the UK. The partnership, which ended in October last year, saw people from across A&O donate over GBP1.5 million to War Child – breaking all previous fundraising records.

The judges commented that the partnership showed "clear engagement, for a difficult cause, with lots of fundraising opportunities as well as volunteering and gifts in kind."

Approximately one third of the money funded War Child's Rescue Childhood project in Emirati Camp in Jordan, offering protection, psychological support and education for 2,310 Syrian refugee children. Nearly 1,200 parents and caregivers are also benefiting from support. The project has been such a success that it has set the standard for early childhood care

and development in the Jordanian national curriculum. (Read more about the partnership in the last issue of [Increasing Access](#).)

The rest of the funds raised were provided for War Child to use flexibly where they are needed most. This type of funding has helped War Child provide emergency support for the Yazidi people in Iraq at a time when all other NGOs were being forced to withdraw from the country due to lack of funding. It has also helped War Child to expand its youth advocacy programme in Jordan and Uganda, and to design a new football-based programme called War Child FC in Central African Republic.

Providing flexible funding has also enabled War Child to strengthen its own operations – for example, by investing in its video gaming team, which is expected to generate over GBP1 million of income for the charity in 2019.

The largest pro bono project delivered during the partnership was a review of War Child's safeguarding policies and procedures in the wake of serious complaints made against other charities at the start of 2018. While War Child was not associated with any of those complaints, A&O teams helped to review its safeguarding policies and governance framework – including on recruitment, training and security – to ensure its practices meet the highest standards.



AN A&O TEAM VISITING WAR CHILD'S
WORK IN UGANDA, APRIL 2018

HIGHLY COMMENDED IN THE FINANCIAL TIMES INNOVATIVE LAWYERS ASIA-PACIFIC AWARDS

A&O has been Highly Commended in the FT Innovative Lawyers Asia-Pacific Awards in the 'Innovation in the rule of law and access to justice' category.

The award recognises A&O's work to advise and prepare guides on the stop and seize powers of officials in Hong Kong, which can be detrimental to individuals carrying stored digital information across borders. This is critical to defending freedom of movement for journalists, activists and NGO workers. The guides produced by A&O cover individual rights and

responsibilities, as well as how to challenge seizure of materials by authorities.

This is the second year running that A&O has been Highly Commended in the Financial Times' Asia-Pacific awards, following recognition last year for our work to tackle cross-border access to justice issues, such as human trafficking, forced labour and child exploitation.



RECOGNITION FOR A LONG-STANDING CONTRIBUTION TO PRO BONO AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT WORK

A&O has been awarded Best Contribution by an International Firm at the LawWorks Awards 2018 for our long-term commitment to supporting the communities around us.

A&O's formal pro bono programme started nearly 30 years ago with lawyers volunteering at Battersea Free Legal Advice Clinic in South London. Today more than 40% of our pro bono work in the UK is still for individuals, whether in legal advice clinics, or through end-to-end casework and direct representation (see [page 11](#) for one of A&O's newest partnerships with anti-poverty charity Z2K).

In recent years, a particular area of focus has been providing pro bono advice for individuals

outside of London, where free legal advice can be hard to access. For example, we partner with Central England Law Centre and Coventry University to provide pro bono employment advice remotely in Coventry, enabling the Law Centre to triple the number of clients it serves.

The award also recognises the Social Finance and Impact Investment Group's work on the GBP5 million notes issuance for UK charity and responsible lender Five Lamps. The funding is set to mobilise over GBP60 million of lending, allowing Five Lamps to offer approximately 100,000 affordable loans. See the last issue of [Increasing Access](#) for the full story.

GUNS IN SCHOOLS – U.S. RESEARCH

In response to the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, in which 17 students and staff were killed, A&O has partnered with the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence on a research project into the possession of firearms in schools.

Over the course of six months, five A&O associates and senior counsel conducted a comprehensive 50-state research project on state and local laws that govern the possession

of firearms in local, private and religious schools across the United States, as well as the policies and practices of some of the largest school districts in key states.

The Giffords Center – which works to save lives from gun violence by shifting culture, changing policies and challenging injustice – is using A&O's research to identify the jurisdictions on which to focus its limited legal resources. Proving "a tremendous resource" for the

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE STUDENTS IN BELFAST



▲ WINNERS (FROM L-R) NUALA MCMAHON, FRANCES RUSSELL AND BRIAN MCDERMOTT, PICTURED WITH CHRIS AULD, RESOURCING MANAGER, AND ANDREW WILSON, SENIOR ASSOCIATE.

The latest Allen & Overy Scholarships have been awarded to three students at Ulster University in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The scholarships were set up by the Belfast Grants Committee of the Allen & Overy Foundation and have been awarded annually since the 2015/16 academic year.

A&O was the first firm to offer scholarships for students studying on the Master of Laws (LLM) Access to Justice course, which focuses on the specialist areas of social security and employment law.

The students work on real life cases under the supervision of experienced law school staff, in preparation for going on to work in the social justice sector and helping to provide greater access to justice across local communities in Northern Ireland.

Center's legal team, A&O's research findings are also being used in ongoing litigation in Florida and we expect to do more work with the Center in the future.



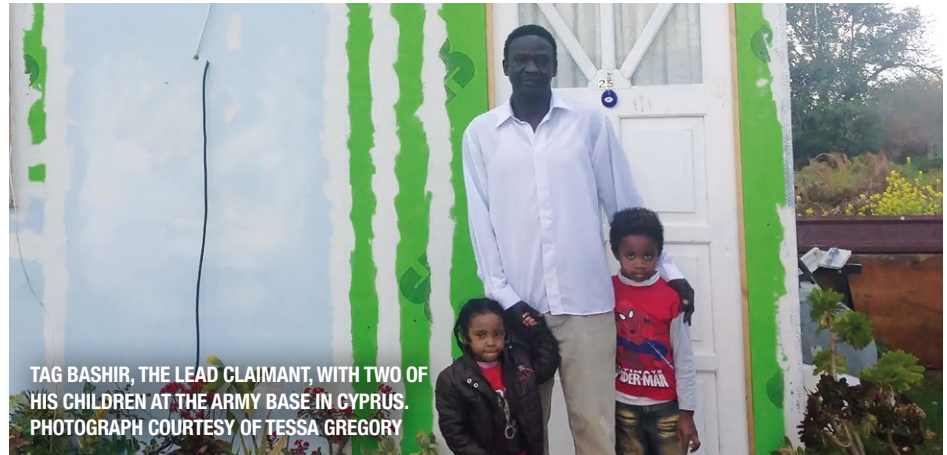
REFUGEES STRANDED ON A BRITISH MILITARY BASE IN CYPRUS FOR 20 YEARS ARE FINALLY GRANTED UK RESIDENCY

In 1998, six families from North Africa and the Middle East were rescued by Britain's Royal Air Force and airlifted to a British military base in Cyprus, after being abandoned by human traffickers on a sinking vessel in the Mediterranean.

Having initially been granted refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention, the families have since then been stranded on the base, living in disused and dilapidated military accommodation after the UK government argued that the Convention did not apply to its military bases.

In 2017, the AIRE Centre – an NGO that works to protect human rights – intervened in the Supreme Court case brought by the refugees. A&O advised the AIRE Centre on its initial decision to intervene and then helped to prepare the AIRE Centre's case.

The team argued not only that the Refugee Convention does apply to the UK's military bases in Cyprus, but that international refugee rights and human rights require practical and effective solutions which the UK Courts must secure. The intervention used the AIRE Centre's expertise in international children's law to focus



in particular on the UK's obligation to prioritise the best interests of the many children involved.

In July 2018, the Supreme Court took the unusual step of issuing an Interim Judgment, ruling that the Refugee Convention does apply to the military bases, but asked additional questions that required further submissions from the team.

In December, just days before the Supreme Court was due to hear the submissions, the UK government agreed to grant the refugees indefinite leave to enter and remain in the UK – finally ending the families' 20 year legal limbo.

Senior associate Maeve Hanna led the A&O team with Litigation partner Andrew Denny. "We all felt it was important to support the AIRE

Centre in highlighting the protections required for this highly marginalised group who are very vulnerable to breaches of their human rights. The Supreme Court ruling has established important legal precedents to secure the rights of refugees in similar situations, and our challenge clearly had a significant bearing on the government's decision to admit the refugees."

The case received much media coverage, with Channel 4 News covering the plight of the families in several reports. News correspondent Simon Israel commented that: "In all my career I have never reported on such an astonishing turn of decision and fortune."

RESTORATIVE LIFESTYLE PROGRAMME FOR THE HOMELESS IN PERTH

In Australia, A&O has held the first two in a series of Restorative Lifestyle Programme (RLP) sessions for The Beacon Homelessness Service, run by The Salvation Army in Perth. The Beacon offers accommodation, case management and a range of other support services to people experiencing homelessness.

Its aim is to provide clients with a clear path back to self-reliance and independence, a key part of which is its RLP that gives rough sleepers skills they can draw on once they have re-entered the community.

To-date, A&O has run workshops in March

and May, both of which were led by Rachelle O'Keefe Assistant HR Manager with assistance from Banking lawyer Alexandra Ioppolo and Corporate graduate Oliver Mills respectively. The interactive sessions provided advice and guidance on how to prepare for a job interview and focused on personal branding, standing out and how to make a good first impression. The feedback received has been very positive with residents comfortable in participating in the discussion, asking questions and sharing personal experiences. The team has already witnessed some residents repeating the workshop and actively engaging the second

time around in order to assist with their upcoming re-entry into the workforce.

Due to the success of the workshops A&O has committed to presenting additional RLP sessions in July, September and December.

A&O's participation in the RLP has involved contributions from various team members, including Litigation partner David Jenaway, Corporate partner Meredith Champion, Corporate senior associate Rebecca Claxon, Banking lawyer Alexandra Ioppolo, Corporate graduate Oliver Mills, Assistant HR Manager Rachelle O'Keefe and Office Manager Donna Karafil.



First case brought against the Government of South Sudan for sexual violence against women

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) is a non-profit network of human rights lawyers who provide legal assistance to individuals and communities that have suffered human rights violations in fragile and conflict-affected areas. In December last year, A&O supported LAW in launching a landmark case against the Government of South Sudan for use of sexual violence by its army during the country's six-year conflict.

This is the first ever complaint brought against the Government of South Sudan before the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva. It outlines the brutal sexual violence, slavery, torture and gang rape used against 30 women and girls during attacks on their villages and while they were attempting to flee the violent conflict between 2016 and 2017.

The 30 individuals represented by LAW include girls as young as 9 and 12 years old at the time of the attacks, plus a mother who saw two of her four children disappear while being gang raped and has not seen them since. The women and girls LAW represents are so frightened of reprisals from the Government and its agents that they have fled the country and are now living as refugees.

WAR CRIMES

Litigation associate Olga Owczarek and partner Mona Vaswani led the A&O team supporting LAW on the case: "The stories of what these women and girls have been through are horrific," says Olga. "There are many more cases like this but, because of the level of conflict, limited evidence of these crimes has been collected."

Antonia Mulvey is the Executive Director of LAW: "South Sudan is suffering from some of the worst sexual violence seen anywhere in the world and rape is routinely being used as

weapon of war against the civilian population. Both the United Nations and African Union have stated that this amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Government and opposition security forces, as well as militia aligned to either side."

A&O FOUNDATION GRANT AND PRO BONO SUPPORT

A&O's pro bono support for LAW followed an A&O Foundation grant of nearly GBP50,000 in 2017. Alongside compiling the complaint, the grant has supported a wider project to build the capacity of South Sudanese lawyers to take testimony from victims and witnesses on human rights violations, and collect evidence that meets international standards and is admissible in court.

"LAW has been working in South Sudan for five years and, to our knowledge and that of our partners, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, no one has been doing this kind of work specifically in the context of sexual violence," says Antonia.

LAW published a high profile report in 2016, '[Accountability for Sexual Violence Committed by Armed Men in South Sudan](#)', and has brought together experts from across the international development sector to look at how the Government can be held accountable.

Yet, despite an agreement to end the conflict in 2018, sexual violence continues. In November, Médecins Sans Frontières reported providing emergency assistance to 125 women and girls who were raped and beaten in just a ten-day period in November 2018.

"Our landmark case not only highlights the seriousness of the violations," says Antonia, "but requests actions by the state to address the crimes. We're hoping it will set important legal precedents too – for example, it includes an application for interim measures specifically to protect the names of all complainants. This will offer protection and safety to the survivors and witnesses of sexual violence in complaints submitted to CEDAW. As far as we know, these protections are not yet in place.

"This case is the first step on a long road to justice for all women and girls in South Sudan, and we very much appreciate A&O's assistance on this project."

Antonia Mulvey, Executive Director of LAW

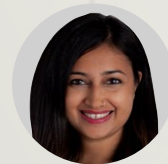
The growing need for free legal advice

Drastic cuts to legal aid in the UK have left tens of thousands of people without access to legal advice, creating a crisis in social welfare law.



Helen Rogers

Senior Pro Bono Manager
and Lawyer – London
Tel +44 20 3088 4922
helen.rogers@allenoverly.com



Aditi Kapoor

Pro Bono Manager
and Lawyer – London
Tel +44 20 3088 7438
aditi.kapoor@allenoverly.com

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) came into force in the UK in 2013, withdrawing legal aid from key areas of law, including family, welfare and housing.

Designed to find savings in the Ministry of Justice's shrinking budget, LASPO narrowed the eligibility criteria for legal aid, reducing the number of people able to access free legal advice and representation.

Since the introduction of LASPO, the Law Centres Network says funding for legal aid has been cut by over GBP750 million, resulting in support being withdrawn from tens of thousands of cases.

"Law Centres have tried to maintain advice services across the country, but at least 15 centres have had to close since LASPO was introduced – most in the first 18 months – because government funding has been removed," says Aditi.

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission recently published its own [report](#) into the impact of legal aid cuts on family, employment and welfare benefits law.

"With welfare benefits in particular," Aditi says, "the report found that legal aid has been all but wiped out, and that this is disproportionately affecting disabled people."

Welfare is an area that A&O has been looking to do more pro bono work in for some time, she explains. "In fact, when we did a review of the areas our people most wanted to support individuals with, welfare claims was the top issue."

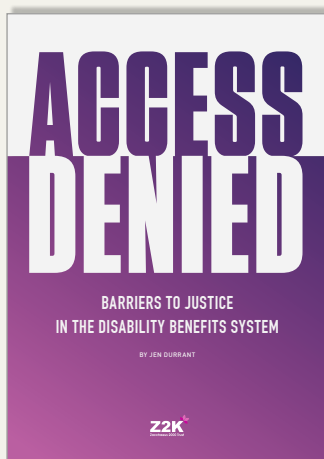
"The impact of these cuts to legal aid is being felt by everyone working in social welfare law."

Aditi Kapoor,
Pro Bono Manager and Lawyer

A FLAWED DISABILITY BENEFITS PROCESS

It was against this backdrop that A&O joined forces with Z2K (Zacchaeus 2000 Trust), a charity that works to solve housing and welfare issues for people in London as well as campaigning for changes to government policy.

An area of growing concern for Z2K was the extent to which recent reform of the disability benefits system had increased the number of people failing their assessments for the benefits. Z2K's 2018 '[Access Denied](#)' report showed that "harsh policies" were preventing hundreds of thousands of disabled and unwell people from getting the disability payments they were entitled to.



As Raji Hunjan, CEO of Z2K, explains: "The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides an Employment and Support Allowance for people with a limited capacity for work because of a disability. It also provides financial support for those living with a long term illness (regardless of capacity for work) through Personal Independence Payments. In both cases, private contractors conduct the initial medical assessments of eligibility for these benefits, looking at factors like how well an applicant can stand, walk and perform basic tasks.

"Around 40% of applicants' claims are rejected during these initial assessments," Raji says, "so they then go to a Mandatory Reconsideration stage. Nearly 90% of the original decisions are upheld at this stage,

so an appeal process then follows. This is the point at which Z2K becomes involved in preparing the appeal and representing applicants in front of the Tribunal."

Since 2016, Z2K had seen a steady rise in the number of people asking for help because their disability benefits have been stopped. By 2018, it had represented nearly 1,000 people at appeal – winning in over 90% of cases – and since the start of 2019 has won 95% of its 124 tribunals. This is an indication, Raji believes, of just how flawed the application process is.

But with potentially hundreds of thousands of people wrongly denied disability payments, the scale of need is far greater than Z2K's caseworkers can tackle. So in October 2018, A&O began a pilot to train volunteer lawyers to support the charity's growing caseload of claimants – none of whom are entitled to legal aid for their appeals at the First-Tier Tribunal.

Litigation associate Robin Marshall worked alongside A&O's pro bono team to set up the new programme with Z2K, initially training 20 A&O lawyers and then allocating an associate or partner and trainee to each of the six clients in the pilot group. Robin himself took on Jack's case – a man in his 60s whose medical conditions had left him largely confined to his home (read Robin and Jack's story on [page 14](#)).

Jack, along with the other five initial A&O clients, achieved a successful outcome at appeal stage, with close to GBP100,000 in total being awarded between them.

"This is genuinely transforming people's lives," says Lucy Isaac, who coordinates the project for Z2K. "The loss of disability benefits can have a knock on effect on other income, such as the rate of housing benefit, which can quickly lead to people living with debt, being in danger of losing their homes and becoming reliant on food banks."

Overall, according to the Government's own statistics, around 70% of DWP decisions are overturned. "But it's a lengthy and draining process for the individuals," says Lucy, "and a huge waste of public money. The process is fundamentally unfair and not fit for purpose."

With the caseload for Z2K growing, a second round of training took place in early May and A&O lawyers will now aim to take on 15 new clients each quarter.

"It's a hands-on project and you really get to know the clients," Aditi says. "But because we've established an effective process throughout the pilot phase, with training and templates already prepared, it's actually not a huge time commitment for volunteers. It's perhaps 15-20 hours per volunteer – not a lot when you think of the impact it will have on a person's life."

CITIZENSHIP FOR MARGINALISED CHILDREN

Providing end-to-end pro bono support for individuals is also proving highly successful in another of A&O's flagship programmes with Coram Children's Legal Centre.

Launched in 2015 in partnership with DLA Piper, the Children's Pro Bono Legal Service provides support to children with an entitlement to British citizenship – estimated to be in the tens of thousands – but who, without legal support, are unable to obtain it.

Like the partnership with Z2K, rather than providing capacity for one-off advice clinics, the programme takes on cases and provides end-to-end representation for the children, with volunteer lawyers trained and supervised by specialist immigration solicitors.

So far, over 50 A&O lawyers have been trained and have obtained British citizenship for 30 children. This is a genuinely life-changing status for some of the most marginalised young people in the country. Without it they cannot obtain a passport, gain the right to vote or enjoy full access to healthcare and higher education.



The Children's Legal Pro Bono Service was Highly Commended in the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards in 2016, and won the Legal Week Innovation Award for CSR Innovation and the LawWorks Award for Most Effective Pro Bono Partnership, also in 2016.

THE IMPACT OF END-TO-END CASEWORK

This type of end-to-end pro bono work with Coram and Z2K, where individuals are represented right through a legal process, has a significant and often life-changing impact on the individuals.

It also brings an immense sense of achievement and builds valuable skills for the lawyers involved, Aditi says. “It gives you complete ownership of a case and of the relationship with a client, usually much earlier than you would get from commercial work. It also goes back to the first principles of problem-solving as a lawyer, and I think having that direct human contact often reminds people of why they wanted to become a lawyer in the first place,” she says.

The specialist training lawyers receive, as well as the processes developed through partnerships with Coram and Z2K, also enables lawyers to develop expertise in specific areas of law and to take on cases as often as other workload allows. “From a time/impact perspective, it’s highly effective pro bono work for us to do,” says Aditi.

A GREATER NEED FOR FREE LEGAL ADVICE

Helen Rogers, A&O’s senior pro bono manager and chair of trustees at the Law Centres Network, agrees that end-to-end pro bono casework is one of the most high-impact ways law firms can support clients who would otherwise go unrepresented due to cuts in legal aid. But it’s also vital, she says, for firms to continue providing volunteer lawyers for the free legal advice clinics that Law Centres offer for people seeking early initial advice.

A&O lawyers have been volunteering at Battersea Law Centre’s legal advice clinic for nearly 30 years, and more recently at Toynbee Hall, both in London. Lawyers also volunteer at clinics in Hong Kong, Belfast, New York, Amsterdam, Madrid and Paris, providing both in-person advice to clients and strategic support to the organisations.

“Lawyers volunteering at free legal advice clinics was the starting point from which our whole pro bono programme developed,” Helen says. “The ad hoc volunteering our lawyers were doing – advising people at weekly clinics on issues like debt, employment, and housing – grew into a formal programme of pro bono volunteering in the 1990s.”

A&O currently has around 300 trained volunteer lawyers in London and Belfast who provide advice to free legal advice clinic clients every week.

“It’s another crucial way that law firms can support the legal aid system,” says Helen.

“The more lawyers that volunteer at legal clinics, the more time it frees up for the specialist legal aid lawyers to take on more complex cases.”

Helen Rogers,
Senior Pro Bono Manager and Lawyer

“It’s particularly important because the more lawyers that volunteer at legal clinics, the more time it frees up for the specialist legal aid lawyers to take on more complex cases.”

As well as providing advice on a whole range of issues that fall outside the scope of legal aid, A&O is developing a more targeted service with Toynbee Hall, which houses one of the oldest free legal advice clinics in the UK.

A&O has had a high-level strategic partnership with Toynbee Hall for five years, helping it to commercialise certain areas of its work in order to fund its advice and support services, as well as providing regular volunteers for its legal clinics. Female lawyers from A&O are now staffing a women-only free legal advice clinic on the first

Saturday of each month, both to support specific vulnerable groups and to allow volunteers to develop specialisms in certain areas.

COPING WITH THE DEMAND

“Law Centres are trying to cope with the growing demand for their services,” says Helen. “Last year Battersea’s legal advice clinic supported around 4,300 people but turned away a lot more. In some parts of the country there’s only one legal aid provider for a million people or more.”

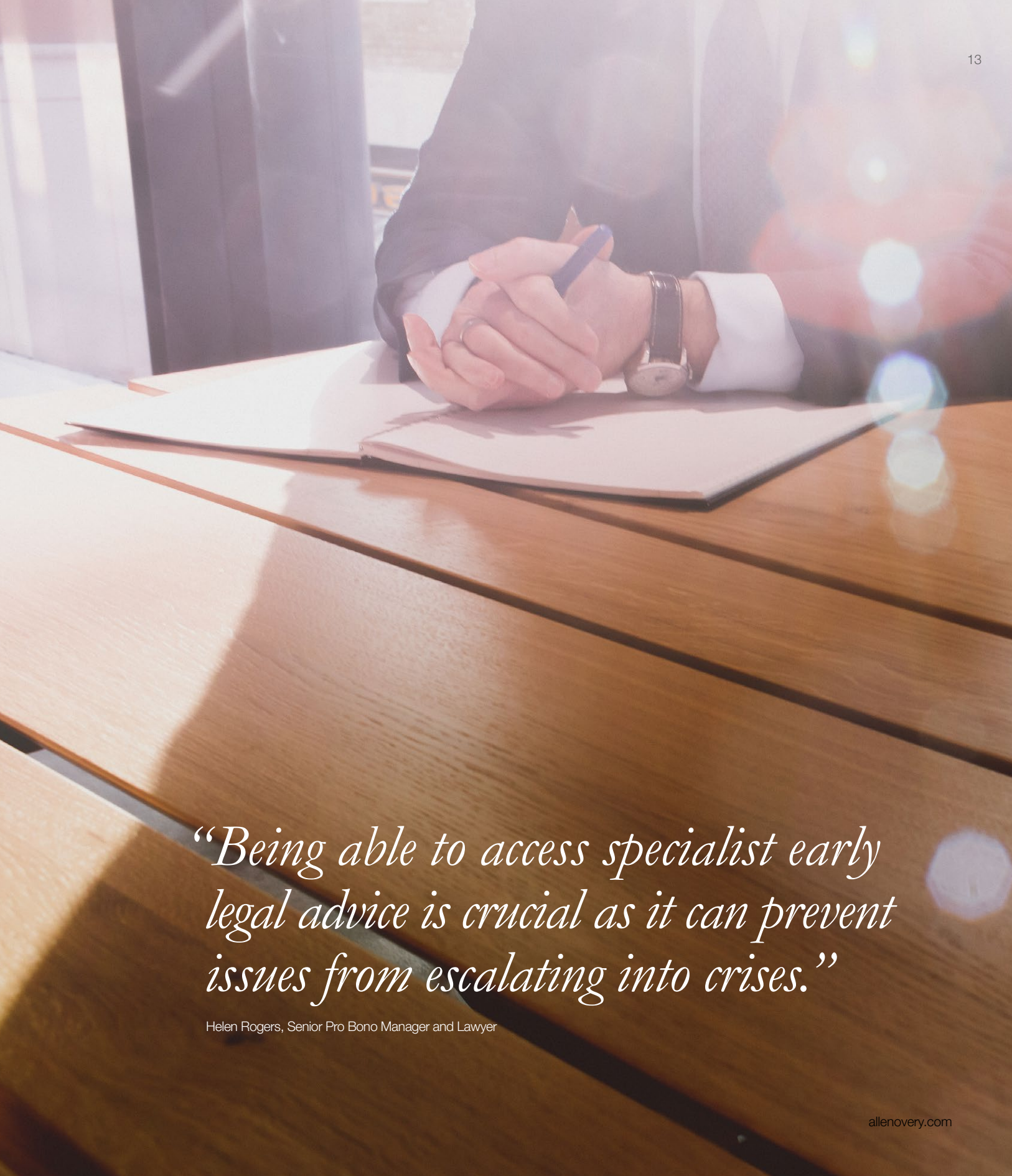
Work is going on to build greater capacity across social welfare law, she explains, for example with the Law Centres Network’s programme of ‘public legal education’ being undertaken with EU nationals. “This is to enable people to do more for themselves and take ownership of legal issues where they can.” A&O has also worked with an organisation, Law for Life, to publish guides for community paralegals to be trained on supporting people with their legal issues.

But the massive gaps in legal aid are creating a crisis for people, Helen believes. “Being able to access specialist early legal advice is crucial – whether for debt, housing, employment or family issues – as it can prevent issues from escalating into crises. Early advice can also save court time down the line.”

The number of people accessing early legal advice, however, is estimated to have dropped from over 570,000 in 2013 to just 140,000 last year. “So you have to question what’s happening to those people who aren’t able to access that legal advice now,” says Helen.

“Law firms have an important role to play in trying to expand the provision of advice through pro bono work. We’re trying to find the most effective ways to do this, but we can’t do it all. We simply can’t support the scale of need that exists now.”

“Being able to access specialist early legal advice is crucial as it can prevent issues from escalating into crises.”

A close-up, low-angle shot of a person in a dark suit and white shirt sitting at a wooden desk. Their hands are clasped together, holding a blue pen. They are writing on a document. The scene is brightly lit, with a strong lens flare effect on the right side. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a window or a bright light source.

“Being able to access specialist early legal advice is crucial as it can prevent issues from escalating into crises.”

Helen Rogers, Senior Pro Bono Manager and Lawyer

Navigating the disability benefits system

London Litigation associate Robin Marshall has overseen the pilot programme with charity Z2K to represent claimants whose applications for disability benefits have been rejected.

When the request came in from the pro bono team for an associate to lead a new project with anti-poverty charity Z2K, it immediately appealed.

This was an opportunity to set up a whole programme of work to address a specific need, while getting the chance to work in an interesting and different area of law that could lead to some real impact on a personal level.

The scale of need around disability benefits is huge and affects some of the most vulnerable and isolated people in the country. My role was to get the relationship with Z2K off the ground; agreeing our co-counsel arrangement and establishing a process that would enable A&O to best support disabled individuals in accessing the welfare payments they are entitled to.

Z2K steps in when the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has turned down an individual's claim for benefits payments and that decision has been upheld at a Mandatory Reconsideration stage. At this point, applicants are entitled to appeal the DWP's decision, and Z2K will refer these applicants to us to assist in their appeal and ultimately represent them before a Tribunal.

Between October 2018 and March 2019, we took on six clients as part of a pilot programme, with an A&O associate or partner and trainee pair responsible for each case.

JACK'S STORY

Pete Summers (then trainee, now associate) and I met our first client, Jack, in January. It's quite an involved first meeting with the client – usually taking two to four hours – and is a chance to really get to know them and find out about their personal circumstances and medical history, all of which are crucial in building a case for appeal.

During the meeting, we learned that Jack, a former painter and decorator nearing retirement age, had been out of work for 20 years because of numerous medical conditions, including severe osteoarthritis, chronic pancreatitis and depression. He is confined to sitting indoors all day as he suffers from constant physical pain. Occasionally Jack will muster the energy to walk round the block for fresh air, but such trips are uncomfortable and take him a long time to cover a short distance.

Jack first applied for a disability allowance six years ago, which was initially approved but then later overturned at a re-assessment.

The assessment process allocates points depending on an applicant's ability to perform routine physical and cognitive activities, such as sitting, standing, navigating familiar journeys or walking certain distances in a reasonable time period and without experiencing significant discomfort.

Based on meetings with several clients, what we started to see were discrepancies between the assessments conducted by the DWP and our clients' stories.

In Jack's case, the assessment found that because he had walked 25 minutes to the assessment centre, he was likely able to undertake work and therefore didn't qualify for disability benefits. When we put the journey into Google Maps, however, we saw that it would take the average person around six minutes. It had taken Jack four times that, but this important qualification hadn't been reflected by the assessor.

Other facts in the assessment were simply wrong, such as Jack's ability to play ball games and chess. When we asked Jack about this, he told us he hadn't played a ball game with his children for many years,

and hadn't played chess since he was a child – in fact he had never owned a chess set.

In another client's case, the assessment stated that he played the guitar, which was a factor in the decision not to award a benefit. When meeting with the client, it quickly became clear that his severely restricted mobility made it impossible for him to do this.

“It can often be disheartening for applicants to read that these inaccurate or incorrect facts have formed the basis of a decision undermining their entitlement to benefits.”

Robin Marshall, Associate

PREPARING FOR THE TRIBUNAL

Our role after the initial meeting with each client is to draft the legal submissions and seek to gather as much further evidence as we can, such as patient records or a GP letter, to help support the client's case. We then file all this with the Tribunal ahead of the hearing to ensure it has had a chance to review and consider the information in light of the DWP's assessment.

It can often be an unpleasant experience for applicants to attend hearings and be quizzed on personal and potentially embarrassing physical or cognitive limitations. In an attempt

to objectively analyse each case, members of the Tribunal often need to ask fairly probing questions. Unless they are pitched in the right way, there's a risk that the intention behind such questions can get a bit lost.

On the whole, I had prepared for a more adversarial exchange with the judge but in the end, after questioning, they accepted all our submissions and found in favour of Jack. Quite often, the DWP does not show up on the day – fortunately for Jack, this was one of those days.

In all six pilot cases we have taken to appeal with Z2K, our clients have been successful – in most cases being awarded the highest rate of financial entitlement. This is significant as it means there is no need to continue demonstrating you spend 35 hours a week actively seeking work (necessary for claiming Job Seekers Allowance), which, for clients suffering from conditions that mean they are unable to perform even basic work-related activities, I imagine could feel quite demoralising.

In total, our six clients were awarded close to £100,000 between them.

The whole process has been hugely eye-opening and I would encourage others to take on a case. It gives you the chance to have ownership of a matter and client, with the responsibility to see it through to the end. There's also the chance to draft submissions and advocate at hearings, which aren't necessarily tasks solicitors typically see. And with this type of pro bono work, each case is fairly self-contained, requiring around 10-20 hours, so it can fit easily around other work depending on capacity.

What we would ideally like now is more A&O volunteers from across all practice groups. While this type of work does

naturally have a litigation bent to it, it's a fairly straightforward and engaging process, and Z2K are fantastic – they provide really excellent training and are always on standby if a particularly novel question arises.

“The whole process has been hugely eye-opening and I would encourage others to take on a case.”

Robin Marshall, Associate



ROBIN MARSHALL, LITIGATION ASSOCIATE ►

The weekend school for under-privileged children in Brussels



TADA (ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir) is a fast-growing non-profit organisation in Brussels. TADA provides some of the city's most under-privileged and vulnerable children with an enhanced education and insight into careers and the wider world around them.

At its core, TADA runs weekend schools for children between 10-13 years old, who attend Saturday classes for three years to supplement their schooling. Run by volunteers, the classes cover subjects as wide ranging as law, robotics, medicine, poetry and entrepreneurship.

A&O has worked with TADA since its creation in the school year 2012-2013, having met at the offices of one of the firm's key clients, which has also supported TADA since its launch.

Brussels partner Wouter Van de Voorde initially provided pro bono support to help the organisation become a legal entity, preparing TADA's articles of association and bringing in specialist advice from A&O on employment and other matters as the charity launched and began to grow.

This initial legal involvement has evolved into A&O lawyers volunteering at TADA's Saturday classes for the past five years.

LAW FOR 10 YEAR-OLDS

"Law is the focus of TADA's classes for one month in each academic year," says associate Niels De Waele. "Representatives from the legal profession – lawyers, barristers and judges – come to the children's classes to show them how the legal system works and what different legal professionals do."

"Teaching 10-13 year-olds about the law is not as easy as it sounds. I studied law for five years and have been practising for another five, and still they ask me questions I find hard to answer!"

"There's something about the simplicity of how children's minds work that means they ask very direct and sometimes challenging questions," Niels says. "It's actually a real learning experience to think about your profession in that way, and to try and explain it in such a clear and uncomplicated manner that a child can understand."



As TADA has grown in size and prominence within Brussels, A&O has continued with pro bono support for the organisation, as well as increasing the number of volunteers at the Saturday classes.

“Every year we get increased interest from colleagues wanting to get involved. We have around eight to ten people volunteering for each session on law at the Saturday schools now,” says Niels. “Some are particularly involved – for example, Greet Vanslambrouck, one of our counsels in Brussels, has actually provided extra support for one of the TADA pupils after the programme had ended. This has allowed her to establish a personal relationship with the student and his family, which was an interesting experience on both sides.”

BRUSSELS' MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN

TADA actively seeks out children living in the most challenging circumstances in Brussels,

often those who are growing up in very low-income households where Dutch and French are not the first or even second languages.

“There are many barriers for these children and their development,” Niels says. “At home, they are not being supported academically as much as other children, often because Belgian languages are not spoken by their families, and because they are less integrated into Belgian society. Multiple studies have also shown that traditional schools unfortunately don't support underprivileged children growing up in Belgium very well.

“Inequality in education is extremely high in Belgium, compared to anywhere else in Europe. This means that if you're born into poverty in Belgium, you statistically have a very high chance of remaining in poverty throughout your life, because the schools are not working as a 'social elevator'. It's a vicious circle that these families are in, but one that TADA is trying to break.”

TADA currently supports 867 students and families through its four weekend schools and extended alumni programme, 'TADA for life', to which students have access from the age of 13 onwards. This alumni platform allows TADA to keep track of the progress the students make in life, offering further support if it is needed, as well as bringing alumni together in a vibrant network.

The organisation has grown ten-fold since it launched and aims to support between 1,000-1,500 families by 2020. TADA also aims to be an inspiring catalyst for other organisations, showing that civic involvement in education is valuable, possible and needed by many.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFE

“These children are from the most underprivileged neighbourhoods in Brussels and have really very few chances in life,” Niels says. “But when you see them at TADA, they have such grit. They come to school every Saturday during term-time, on top of their normal schooling, and study longer and harder than all their peers, in a language that's not spoken at home.

“And when you see the student alumni who come back to TADA and what they have achieved, it's remarkable. Some of them have travelled to the U.S. and presented to senior business people and politicians – I don't know if I could have done that at their age,” says Niels. “They're now speaking three or four languages – Dutch, French and English as well as their home language – and are full of self-confidence and determination.”

“It shows that everyone has talent – you just have to find it.”

“These children are all so grateful for the opportunities offered to them. It feels good to be able to contribute to that.”

Niels De Waele, Associate



TADA'S SCHOOL IN BRUSSELS

Eight to ten A&O lawyers from Brussels and Antwerp volunteer for each session on law at TADA's Saturday schools:



“TADA provides an opportunity to both pupils and volunteers to discover each other’s worlds and, who knows, maybe even spark an interest in a vocation.”

Alexandre Holvoet, Associate



“TADA is not only a wonderful idea, it has definitely proved to be a very interesting moment of dialogue and time for sharing. A rewarding experience that I would recommend to anyone.”

Guillaume Delfosse, Associate



“Teaching 10-13 year-olds about the law is not as easy as it sounds. I studied law for five years and have been practising for another five, and still they ask me questions I find hard to answer!”

Niels De Waele, Associate

TAKING PART IN TADA'S PROGRAMME



A STUDENT AT TADA'S SCHOOL



A TADA SESSION ON THE LAW



“TADA is a valuable teaching experience, not only for the children but equally for the guest teachers who obtain an insight into the world and mindset of these incredibly intelligent pupils. Facilitating access to higher education and to professional opportunities for these children is an absolute must for our society and benefits everyone.”

Laura Neven, Junior Associate



“I did not quite know what to expect when I first did my session, and I really was amazed to see how the kids were committed and engaged, in particular when they had to perform as lawyers themselves. The yearly session with TADA is now a fixed and high priority item in my agenda!”

Pierre-Olivier Mahieu, Partner

To find out more about TADA, visit tada.brussels

Systemic change in rural Tanzania

In October 2014, A&O began a two-year global charity partnership with Amref Health Africa, an organisation that brings sustainable health access to communities across Africa.

The partnership's initial focus was a project to reduce the number of school-age girls becoming pregnant in a rural region of Tanzania, thereby keeping more girls in education and helping to break the cycle of poverty there.

Three years since the partnership has ended, its impact has gone far beyond that, achieving systemic change at local government level as well as within communities. Here, we talk to some of the key people involved in the partnership about what it helped to achieve in two remote areas of Tanzania.



Nyerere Jackson
Amref Tanzania
Project Manager, Meatu



Aisha Byanaku
Amref Tanzania
Project Manager, Handeni



Frances Longley
Amref UK
Chief Executive Officer



Aleena Khan
Amref UK
Programmes Manager
for Tanzania



Annelies Van der Pauw
Partner and Co-head of
Corporate Responsibility,
Allen & Overy, Amsterdam

EDUCATION IS EVERYTHING

"In this world we're living in right now, education is everything."

This was the simple message from Amref project manager Nyerere Jackson when a team from A&O arrived in a remote area of Tanzania in February 2015.

Nyerere was project manager for the Afwa Kwa Vijana – 'Good Health for Youth' – project in Meatu District, part of the Simiyu region in northern Tanzania, one of the poorest regions in the country.

Nyerere: "In 2014, Meatu's population of over 300,000 had the worst health indicators of all five districts in the Simiyu region and faced high levels of early and unplanned pregnancies. Traditional rites of passage encourage girls to marry far younger than the legal age of consent.

"As well as the health risks this brings, in Tanzania girls who become pregnant are expelled from school, which significantly limits their opportunities and exposes them to the cycle of extreme poverty. Over the past decade, 50,000 girls have had their schooling terminated across the country.

"Early and unplanned pregnancies are largely down to a lack of sex education for girls and boys, both in school and within communities. In 2014, no resources had been allocated by the government so young people had very limited access to sex education and health services in Meatu.

"In addition, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) was very prevalent among certain tribes, with girls as young as seven being cut. FGM/C is not only physically and psychologically harmful, it's also directly linked to child marriage and a lack of education for girls."

LAUNCHING THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

Amref Health Africa was chosen as A&O's global charity partner in a vote of 2,500 people across the firm. At the start of the partnership the goal was to raise GBP250,000 to fund the Afwa Kwa Vijana community education project in Meatu, training teachers and peer educators to reach 32,600 young people – both in school and those harder to reach out-of-school – with sexual and reproductive health education, as well as training community health workers to provide youth-friendly services.

Alongside this, a key aim of the partnership was to develop a programme of pro bono support –

using both legal and other professional skills – to support Amref more broadly as an organisation.

Annelies Van der Pauw, partner in Amsterdam and co-head of corporate responsibility at A&O, was part of the team that first visited Amref in Meatu.

“We were unsure at the start of the partnership how much we might raise for Amref. We had just concluded our first and very successful global partnership with AfriKids, but it was hard to know how much people would engage with a new charity partner.

“It became pretty clear, though, after our first fundraising campaign in December 2014 that people felt strongly about the issues the partnership was addressing.

“There was something about seeing a teenage girl, exhausted, trying to hold a squirming toddler in her arms, that really brought home how much early pregnancy impacts girls’ lives. They can’t complete their schooling and so their chance of getting a decent job and breaking out of the cycle of poverty disappears.

“Our first fundraising campaign, where people donate the first hour or day’s pay of the new year, raised GBP335,000 – far beyond what we expected – so five months into the partnership we were able to fully fund the Afwa Kwa Vijana project.

“In February 2015, 12 of us from A&O visited Meatu to launch the project. My experience of meeting Amref and the community we were supporting was very positive. The local Amref team of doctors was dedicated and motivated, with a lot of knowledge about the rural communities and their leaders.

“The communities we visited generally lacked basic resources, so Amref’s prime sources of support were providing education and information for people to run their daily lives, as well as healthcare.”

SETTING BROADER GOALS

By exceeding the GBP250,000 target for Meatu so early into the partnership, A&O was able to

fund a similar community education scheme in another area of Tanzania.

Aisha Byanaku is Amref’s project manager for the Kijana Wa Leo (‘Youth of Tomorrow’) project in Handeni, in the east Tanga region, which has a population of around 355,000.

“Girls and young women in the remote district of Handeni face similar issues to those in Meatu. Approximately 40% of the population lead a nomadic lifestyle, which means groups frequently move in search of new pastures and water for their livestock. This limits their access to sexual health services and education.

“In particular, in these communities we wanted to address the issue of gender-based violence and severe patriarchal practices in which men often control all decision making. This restricts women’s and girls’ ability to access their right to health, and limits their opportunities.

“This also leads to harmful traditional practices like FGM/C, which in 2014 affected an estimated 70% of nomadic girls in Handeni. There was a real lack of knowledge and access to sex education in the region, and our initial assessment showed no health facilities that we could define as youth-friendly.”

PRO BONO SUPPORT TO DRIVE LONG-TERM CHANGE

Annelies: “We didn’t expect to exceed our fundraising targets so early, but Amref already had a project plan scoped out for a similar community education scheme in Handeni, so we were able to reach tens of thousands more young women there.

“To underpin the funding, our pro bono team developed a programme with Amref to support its project managers in how to advocate for change more effectively within communities and at local government level in Tanzania.

“The belief was that by engaging local district councils more effectively, Amref could obtain a commitment for future funding to sustain its work on sexual and reproductive health education far beyond our partnership.

“This piece of work grew into the largest pro bono project we’ve ever delivered for a global



STUDENTS IN HANDENI

charity partner. It brought together 30 people – lawyers and support professionals – from the U.S., London, Amsterdam, Johannesburg, Singapore and Riyadh, who developed a comprehensive toolkit and training programme for Amref.

“The toolkit is a suite of interactive documents that explains the legal rights relevant to different areas of Amref’s advocacy work, as well as guidance on how to develop effective communication strategies. A&O’s team delivered the toolkit through training courses for all Amref’s project managers in Tanzania.

Nyerere: “The advocacy toolkit enabled us to develop skills and find the information we needed to campaign for change. We used it to train young people on grassroots advocacy – how to use knowledge of sexual health to demand more quality information and services and make informed decisions – and also how to collectively hold decision makers to account.

“By lobbying local government, we have now seen an 18-fold increase in funding in the Meatu district budget for sexual health services and education. This is a huge achievement and means we have the resources to continue our work after the external funding ends.

Annelies: “This is really the ultimate aim of our charity partnerships – to bring our funding and professional skills together to support the charity’s long-term success in the future.”



WIM DEJONGHE IN HANDENI, 2016



HANDENI DISTRICT COMMISSIONER WITH PARTNERS JOANNA PAGE AND TOM LEVINE



OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH PEER EDUCATORS IN MEATU

A RECORD-BREAKING PARTNERSHIP

Overall, throughout the two-year partnership, A&O contributed a record GBP1.72 million to Amref, raising GBP930,000 – nearly four times the initial target – and providing GBP770,000 of pro bono volunteering time and GBP16,000 of in-kind support.

Frances Longley is the CEO of Amref Health Africa in the UK: “A&O has an incredible philanthropic and pro bono profile, as well as a big international network, so we had high expectations for the relationship. In fact what we achieved through this remarkable partnership surpassed everyone’s expectations.

“We set out to support 32,600 young people but have now reached more than five times that number across two regions of Tanzania, training hundreds of health workers and refurbishing health facilities across the regions to provide youth-friendly services. Without A&O’s expertise, I don’t think we’d have achieved such lasting and systemic change in these areas.

“The advocacy project has had a significant impact, but the pro bono support wasn’t limited to that. A&O delivered 27 projects for us, including giving us advice on data protection and holding workshops on corruption and managing liability. This enabled us to review and

develop our policies and ensure we have robust procedures in place. A&O’s in-kind support – for example designing and printing Amref’s annual review for two years – allowed our small team to focus their time and resources on our community programmes.

Nyerere: “The A&O volunteers who visited us in Tanzania were so inspiring – in particular, Wim Dejonghe [Senior Partner]. His emotional and inspirational speech during his visit in 2016 really moved the young people here and has stuck with me. I often think about his words: “Youth should be the architect of their own lives and destiny”.

Charles Mbukwimba Daud is 19 years old. He lives in his school dormitory and has been working as an in-school peer educator with Amref for two years. Charles educates his friends and peers on early pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

“The more you learn, the easier your life becomes. Early pregnancy can cut your dreams so I want everyone to benefit from sexual and reproductive health awareness because this education is free of charge. Becoming a peer educator can also help young people become strong like me – I even speak in public now!”

“The more you learn, the easier your life becomes.”

CHARLES, A PEER EDUCATOR IN MEATU





THREE YEARS ON, WHAT IMPACT HAS THE PARTNERSHIP HAD IN MEATU AND HANDENI?

Overall, Amref has now reached 158,698 young people across Meatu and Handeni – more than five times the number it set out to – with improved access to sexual education and health services. Systemic change is happening within communities to value education over early motherhood and marriage, and to replace violent traditional practices like FGM/C with Alternative Rites of Passage ceremonies.

IN MEATU...

- Using the advocacy toolkit, Amref has secured a commitment from the local government for an 18-fold increase in public spending on sexual and reproductive health services. In 2017/18 the budget had increased to TZS36 million (approximately USD15,500) and was rising.
- Amref also used the toolkit to train 25 youth groups and 75 out-of-school youths on grassroots advocacy, helping them to campaign for quality information and services and hold decision makers to account.
- Community elders have publicly denounced FGM/C and introduced an Alternative Rites of Passage ceremony for girls. No FGM/C procedures were reported across 2017/18 within one of the main tribes in which it had previously been rampant.

- Comprehensive sex education has been incorporated into the curriculum of all 134 schools in Meatu. To date, over 89,240 in- and out-of-school youths have received sexual and reproductive health education through Amref's after-school clubs, peer outreach and community activities.
- Early pregnancies have decreased significantly
 - no school drop-outs as a result of pregnancy were recorded in Meatu in 2017.
- 105 health care providers have been trained and 47 health facilities are now providing youth-friendly sexual health services across the district.

“Investing in this kind of pro bono work gives our financial support a more sustainable, long-term impact. Amref now has a framework and skills that it can apply to other projects in Tanzania and Africa.”

Annelies Van der Pauw, Partner

IN HANDENI...

- 69,458 women and young people have benefitted from improved sexual and reproductive health education.
- 600 teachers and students have been trained as in-school educators, equipping over 27,000 students with the knowledge and skills to make responsible choices about sexual and reproductive health.
- 225 out-of-school peer educators have been trained, as well as 240 influential leaders who hold the key to achieving sustainable change in the community.
- Like Meatu, community elders have publicly denounced FGM/C and introduced an Alternative Rites of Passage ceremony – 500 girls have now graduated through this ceremony, avoiding FGM/C.
- Police and judicial officers have received training on gender-based violence and FGM/C to understand the importance of recording cases and referring victims to other support services.

FARIDA, A HEALTHCARE WORKER IN HANDENI



Farida is one of the many healthcare workers who have been trained in sexual and reproductive health and rights in Handeni. She sees 20-30 young people each month in her youth-friendly sessions at the local health facility.

“A lot of the young women who come to me for counselling have experienced either gender-based violence or rape, so now I can refer them on to the police station for support. I’m grateful that we have these youth-friendly services now – even simple things like having a curtain for privacy and tables with chairs makes a huge difference.”

Aleena Khan is Amref’s Programmes Manager for Tanzania: “Through this partnership, we have delivered two exemplary sexual health and education projects that have helped a generation of young people – especially young women – access quality education and services, with well-trained staff in suitable facilities where people can ask questions, understand their rights and seek support.

“Across Meatu and Handeni we’ve worked at grassroots level to bring about change that is initiated by the communities themselves. This has sown the seeds for the continued replacement of FGM/C with alternative ceremonies.

“In addition, we’ve already seen teenage pregnancy rates and related school drop-outs falling. Much of this has been achieved through activities in after-school clubs where information is shared among girls and boys through singing, dancing and drama, which provides a safe forum for discussion and debate, as well as a platform for young people to openly discuss issues with their parents.

“We have also achieved tangible government engagement with sexual health and education and now have a far larger budget allocation in Meatu, which is continuing to rise.

“Training both girls and boys, and engaging families and the wider community, has helped break down taboos and

promote better understanding of sexual health across communities.

“Young people tell us they are far more confident now to demand quality sexual health services and education. This is reducing stigma around these issues and helping children to live without fear and make smart decisions.

“The future looks brighter for the youth in Meatu and Handeni. While there are still challenges to overcome, more girls and young women have control over their sexual and reproductive health, know their rights and have the skills to advocate and drive change in their community.”

WHAT ARE AMREF’S HOPES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN TANZANIA NOW?

Nyerere: “Across Tanzania, we want to ensure more young people are aware of their rights and have the capacity to demand services and campaign for change. We hope that all girls can become women without having to undergo the cut, and that we can support a new generation to break down the barriers to universal health care.

“An engaged, educated and healthy youth will help break multi-generational poverty. As skilled and informed citizens, our young people will contribute to strengthening their communities in the long term.”

Aleena: “We have built on this success to scale up our sexual and reproductive health

and rights programmes, in particular to bring an end to FGM/C across Africa in line with the Sustainable Development Goal to end the practice by 2030.

“Our partnership with A&O highlighted the effectiveness of working holistically to address harmful practices while empowering girls to know their rights. We have recently received funding to scale up Amref’s Centre of Excellence to End FGM/C, based in Nairobi, and are using a similar approach of working with key decision makers, such as community elders, to build resistance to FGM/C. To date, we have supported more than 17,000 girls in Kenya and Tanzania to transition into adulthood without having to undergo the cut, and are now expanding our approach into Uganda, Ethiopia and Senegal.”

Frances: “This truly strategic partnership is testament to what corporations and NGOs can achieve when we combine forces for good. As well as enabling us to transform the opportunities for a generation of girls in two districts in Tanzania, the expertise we gained was instrumental in our development and growth as an organisation. Across sub-Saharan Africa we are building on the remarkable success of the partnership, ensuring more women and girls know their rights and are equipped with the skills to demand change.”

“I never believed I would escape FGM/C – and now I have even had sexual health training. I am so grateful for this education. It makes girls from our tribe become mature and valued without undergoing the cut. In our tribe, you couldn’t wear the headdress if you had not been circumcised. I can’t believe I have escaped the pain and all the other effects.”

Lamyangai Mollel, aged 14, one of the Maasai girls who have graduated through the Alternative Rites of Passage ceremony in Kang’ata village, Handeni



OUR TWO YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH AMREF IN NUMBERS

Three years on, our partnership with Amref has enabled nearly 159,000 young people in Meatu and Handeni to access improved sexual health services and education. School-age pregnancies have fallen and community elders have publicly denounced the practice of FGM/C.



Highly Commended

Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards 2017 and the Business Charity Awards 2016



GIRLS WHO HAVE COMPLETED AMREF’S ALTERNATIVE RIGHTS OF PASSAGE PROGRAMME

Ten questions for...

Beilqes Alzawm

Beilqes Alzawm is a human rights advisor and assistant to the group manager in A&O's Corporate practice in London.

Beilqes studied political science in her home country of Yemen and went on to build a career in human rights there. In 2014, her work brought her to London, but when war broke out in Yemen it became too dangerous to return home with her son.

Beilqes applied for refugee status in the UK and volunteered with the British Red Cross as an Arabic interpreter and case worker. But she struggled to find stable employment in the human rights sector. Despite holding a master's degree and having nine years' experience, most companies wanted candidates with experience in the UK or Europe.

In her search for a job, Beilqes was referred to Breaking Barriers, a charity that works with businesses to help refugees in London find stable employment.

A&O has been providing work placements through Breaking Barriers since 2015, and offered Beilqes the role in the Corporate practice. She started in July 2018 and has extended her placement twice – the first time Breaking Barriers has had a placement extended by an employer – taking her up to May 2019.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN UNDER 30 WORDS...

My name is Beilqes. I am a woman, a mother and a fighter who believes in change and that nothing in this life is constant.

WHAT TYPE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WORK DO YOU SPECIALISE IN?

Equality and discrimination – women's and children's rights.

WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE LIKE OF APPLYING FOR REFUGEE STATUS IN THE UK?

It was a very hard process to get confirmation that my son and I could stay here legally, but it was even harder to learn the language and culture. My feelings around that time are difficult to put into words.

Thankfully I managed to get everything sorted – I was so relieved when I heard we could stay here. Then the real journey started – of finding a job, settling and securing my life in this beautiful and big city.

Breaking Barriers was amazing – they supported me in so many ways, listening to me first, understanding my needs and then providing advice. Breaking Barriers did not give me the fish, they taught me how to fish myself.

HOW HAVE YOU FOUND THE TRANSITION TO YOUR ROLE AT A&O?

When I got the job I was amazed and very happy. Although it's not in my usual field of work, I saw that it would give me useful work experience and improve my English.

Many things have surprised me during my time at A&O. There are lots of young people here, and lots of women. In Yemen, we don't have a lot of women in business, even at a junior level. It makes me feel proud and it's an honour to be here.

Stacey [Tretheway – group manager in Corporate] is wonderful and has a patient way of working that has helped me understand everything around me. As well as practising English with me, she has also introduced me to

the British culture in a soft, clear and interesting way. I am still learning a lot from her.

Most importantly, Stacey has helped restore my confidence, which is very important for anyone who has arrived in a completely new place. And having my placement extended twice has had a very positive impact on me, knowing that A&O is happy with my work.

HOW WILL THIS EXPERIENCE HELP YOU BUILD YOUR CAREER IN THE UK?

I thought I would just be doing admin work, but spending time here has actually helped me plan the next steps in my career.

I am now studying for the Graduate Diploma in Law at the University of Law, which is the pathway into legal practice for non-law graduates. I hope to be able to convert my qualifications from Yemen so that they're recognised in the UK.

My long-term ambition is to continue working in human rights, either as a lawyer or an advisor, with a focus on women and children. I was forced into an arranged marriage at the age of 16 and it was hard for me to escape with my son. So I understand very well how important rights are for women.

DESCRIBE YOUR PERFECT DAY OFF WORK...

I like doing things I'd always wished to do but couldn't, because traditions forbade them for women and girls in Yemen – things like running, cycling and other outdoor activities.

I like discovering all the new and beautiful areas of London. I'm simply enjoying learning about

My proudest achievement in human rights work is...

...when I was working as a project manager and women's rights advisor in Yemen with GIZ, an international development organisation.

I was involved with a project on 'Gender and Generation Dialogue' that focused on child marriage. One of its main outcomes was a memorandum signed by community members in Yemen, which defined the minimum age of marriage as 18.

This was a significant achievement as there is no single law in Yemen that determines the age of marriage for both genders – the Yemeni Parliament has failed to pass the Act of the legal age of marriage.

This community memorandum therefore acts as an Honoured Agreement, which people still remain committed to today. I consider this to be a great achievement and is something I often think about.

British culture and practising some of my basic rights.

I also like Mondays – everyone is fresh and smiling after the weekend. Every week I learn something new, so I look forward to Mondays!

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE CITY IN THE WORLD AND WHY?

If not my two beautiful home cities, Sanaa and London, then I would say Babylon in Iraq – one of the oldest civilisations. I love history and have a very old name, Belqees, which means Queen of Sheba. From that name and the ancient Babylon civilisation come lots of beautiful stories.

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE MOST IN THE WORLD AND WHY?

I admire all the people around me – everyone adds something to me. But the person I admire most and am so proud to have in my life is my son.

He has never just been my son – he is like my brother and my friend too. I would need

a much longer article to fully explain why, but I will try to make it short!

When he was a baby, he made me determined to continue my life, finish my studies and get work, become an independent woman and challenge traditions and bad beliefs in my society. He made me determined never to give up.

As he has grown up, I've learnt lots of great things from him: the real meaning of life, how to love and how to be grateful. He has always supported me. My life has felt broken at times, but he has been the cure.

Badr is 18 years old now. I was younger than that when I had him, so we have grown up together. We cry and laugh together, live together and now go to school together. He has always been the motivation for me and we give each other hope in life.

WHAT WORDS OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION TO YOU?

Work experience is so important for refugees and migrants hoping for a better life. Lots of

people have worked in their home countries and have good experience, but they find it difficult to apply here. This means they are often unable to support themselves and stand on their own feet. Equally, the country doesn't get the benefit of their valuable experience.

With proper work, refugees and migrants can be doubly strong because they activate their old experiences from their home country and their new experiences in the UK. They can help their communities as well as themselves.

I was completely paralysed and lost without work.

I want to tell people about my experiences so that they know how valuable employment is for refugees and migrants' stability. Hopefully, another woman will benefit as much from this experience as me.

I am looking forward to what is waiting for me as a strong woman again in my second home.



Ending institutionalised care for children

Seven months into our global charity partnership with Hope and Homes for Children, we have already raised GBP500,000 – half way towards our target of GBP1 million.



This is in large part from the success of our 'First Hour, First Day' campaign, in which 950 people across nearly every A&O office donated the first hour or day of their salary in 2019, raising GBP423,000 for Hope and Homes for Children.

Another major fundraising event saw 60 A&O staff, partners and alumni bring the Broadway musical 'Guys and Dolls' to an audience of 500 people in the Bloomsbury Theatre, London, in March, raising over GBP20,000.

THE MISSION TO CLOSE ALL ORPHANAGES

GBP500,000 of the money we raise will support Hope and Homes for Children's work in Nepal and India to prevent child trafficking through orphanages. The rest of the money will provide core funding for the charity, giving it the flexibility to direct funds where they are needed most, in order to achieve its overall aim of closing all orphanages around the world.

Kate Cavelle, A&O's Head of Pro Bono and Community Investment, explained why we are supporting Hope and Homes for Children's mission in the last issue of [Increasing Access](#).

Delia Pop is Director of Programmes and Advocacy at Hope and Homes for Children: "The success of A&O's fundraising means already we can start to establish solid foundations across India and Nepal for the overhaul of child protection and care systems,

and support children transitioning from orphanage to family-based care."

ENDING CHILD TRAFFICKING THROUGH ORPHANAGES

In Nepal and Jharkhand, India, Hope and Homes for Children is setting up two life-changing programmes to bring about local government commitments to end exploitation and the practice of trafficking children through orphanages.

The charity will develop community-based services to support families where they live, preventing at-risk children from becoming separated from their homes. It will also ensure that children who are already in orphanages are reintegrated into loving and safe families, wherever possible, and that there are good quality alternative care options for children where no family care options can be found.

If we reach our GBP1 million fundraising target, Hope and Homes for Children will help an estimated 400 children transition out of institutions and into family-based care in its target areas within Nepal and India, as well as using community-based interventions to prevent a further 4,000 children and their families from being separated in the first place – see Jacinta's story on [page 31](#).

KEY PRO BONO SUPPORT

Pro bono will also form a key part of the global charity partnership with Hope and Homes for Children. In April, a team from A&O travelled to

Delhi and Jharkhand to continue scoping out the main programme of work across five key areas:

Building a consensus on the definition of institutional care across the international development sector. This will help to define the true scale of the problem globally and clarify the resources and investment needed to tackle the issue. Consensus on a definition is also important to build an understanding of best practice, so that other charity and non-profit organisations can change the way they operate. This will prevent individuals and organisations with a vested interest in the orphanage industry from exploiting the current lack of consensus and clarity.

Positioning a UN Resolution to recognise that institutional care harms children.

This will have a significant impact on the funding and focus within the international development sector. We have an important role to play here in sharing what we learn with other private sector organisations to raise awareness and understanding of this issue. We will also work with Hope and Homes for Children to help draft guidelines, convene key stakeholders and represent it in the relevant forums.

Building an advocacy strategy with Hope and Homes for Children – ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Rwanda in 2020 – to showcase emerging examples of best practice on alternative care and deinstitutionalisation in India. As well as comparative legal research looking at child protection legislation across the region, we can use our international network to help identify key stakeholders and catalysts for change in India.

Strengthening the business case for family-based and alternative care.

By distilling existing data into advocacy materials for use at regional and state level, we can help Hope and Homes for Children to demonstrate that family-based care brings savings for governments. We can also share our experience of training in advocacy and child rights (developed through our previous partnerships with Amref Health Africa and AfriKids), looking at in-country legal training for community groups.

Improving access to best practice guidance on alternative care reform.

Developing a repository of simplified child protection policies and guides will help child care institutions

transition from being residential institutions to providing dedicated support for families and strengthening local communities. This will help prevent children from becoming vulnerable to trafficking. Hope and Homes for Children is also considering an app that supports gate-keeping mechanisms in the child protection system and sets out child rights information for children in community groups and safe spaces.

WHAT'S NEXT IN OUR PARTNERSHIP?

Next up is a fundraising trek along the Carpathian Mountains in Central and Eastern Europe in October. A team of around 25 people from A&O will trek across the Central Romania

stretch, taking in steep mountain passes, ancient forests, Transylvanian castles and medieval villages en-route to Omu Peak, the highest point in the region. The team will also have the opportunity to see Hope and Homes for Children's work in action at the end of the trek.

To find out more about our partnership with Hope and Homes for Children, contact:



Daisy Wakefield
Global Charities and
Communications Manager
Tel +44 203 088 3443
daisy.wakefield@allenovery.com

“The success of A&O’s fundraising means we can start to establish solid foundations across India and Nepal for the overhaul of child protection and care systems, and support children transitioning from orphanage to family-based care.”

Delia Pop, Director of Programmes and Advocacy,
Hope and Homes for Children





JACINTA AND HER FAMILY



JACINTA WITH HER AUNT

Jacinta's story...

Jacinta lives in Jharkhand, India, an area where traffickers are known to target women and girls for forced labour and slavery. Jacinta had dropped out of school to help her family earn enough money to support her, but in doing so was at risk of being sent away to an orphanage by her family, in the belief that she would be safer there away from the traffickers.

Not only does this deprive children like Jacinta of the family love and individual attention they need to thrive, but being in an institution, cut off from families and communities, puts children at a

higher risk of abuse, often from older children and staff.

Instead, Hope and Homes for Children has been able to provide Jacinta's family with the income they need to keep her with them and to return to school. We are also helping Hope and Homes for Children to establish a 'Child Friendly Space' in Jharkhand, near Jacinta's home, so that she has the confidence and guidance to catch up on her studies and focus on a brighter future, as she says, "of one day becoming an engineer".



Reporting back from Nepal

Catherine Husted, Head of Pro Bono and Community Investment in Hong Kong, and Edward Mackaness, Associate Director in London, both travelled to Nepal last November on mountain climbing trips. While there, they took the opportunity to visit one of Hope and Homes for Children's charity partners, Forget Me Not, whose work A&O is supporting through our partnership.



The displacement of children from families in Nepal accelerated during the civil war that raged from 1996 to 2006. The earthquakes that hit the country in 2015 further fuelled the orphanage industry. As foreigners poured money into the country to help the 'orphans', thousands of children were separated from their families to boost the industry and attract foreign donations.

Currently, there are 567 registered orphanages in Nepal and many more unregistered ones, confining an estimated 17,000 children within the orphanage 'industry'. "It's no coincidence that 72% of these institutions are in tourist destinations," says Catherine.

"Children are taken from their families by networks of traffickers with the promise that they will get a good education, but the stark reality is that education, food and care are lacking. The children are used to encourage

donations from foreign tourists, which usually go straight into the pockets of those running the orphanages," Catherine says.

REINTEGRATION

So far, by working with the Government, Forget Me Not has closed 13 orphanages in Nepal.

Edward and Catherine spent the day with the charity's project director and team of reintegration officers and counsellors during their time there.

"Reintegration of an 'orphan' back into a family or kinship group involves a really complex process," says Edward.

"Reintegration officers have responsibility for the children from the point they leave the orphanages until they're settled into a family. It's such an important role and I was so

impressed by the skill and commitment of the officers.”

Catherine agrees. “One of the main things that stands out about Forget Me Not is their total dedication and commitment to reuniting children with their families.”

“The team works such long hours, often travelling huge distances to rescue children. They give so much care and love to these children when they’re in the transit homes – it’s a frightening situation for the children and they need a lot of reassurance that they’re now in a safe place.”

WHERE CHILDREN BELONG

“We met several young people who recounted their experiences of orphanages,” Edward says. “It’s distressing to hear their accounts of abuse and suffering. They were all upset sharing their stories.

“Namrata, one of the girls rescued from an orphanage, told us she prayed every night with her mouth shut to be reunited with her family. This finally happened in 2014. “I am now where I belong”, she told us.”

“I was so inspired by the amazing progress the young people are making. Krishi, one of the boys we met, is a stellar pupil achieving top grades in his school. He’s now on course to become a qualified social worker,” says Edward.



EDWARD WITH NAMRATA AND RIJA

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

For both Catherine and Edward, changing perceptions around orphanages is sensitive but crucial.

“I want our partnership with Hope and Homes for Children to raise awareness about what happens in these orphanages,” says Edward. “It’s an issue not many people fully understand and it’s not always black and white – it’s a nuanced and complex debate that needs to

be carefully shaded in.”

“Often, very poor families will pay for a child to be placed in an orphanage under the false promise of a good education and a better life, just to be used as a commodity,”

Catherine says. “I hope we can raise the much needed funds to reintegrate as many children as possible back into their families and prevent many more from being separated in the first place.”



“I want our partnership with Hope and Homes for Children to raise awareness about what happens in these orphanages.”

Edward Mackaness, Associate Director



RAJIT AND FOSTER FAMILY, INDIA



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Email

ProBonoTeam@allenoverly.com
if you would like to receive future
issues of Increasing Access.

GLOBAL PRESENCE

Allen & Overy is an international legal practice with approximately 5,500 people, including some 550 partners, working in 44 offices worldwide. Allen & Overy LLP or an affiliated undertaking has an office in each of:

Abu Dhabi	Bucharest (associated office)	Ho Chi Minh City	Moscow	Seoul
Amsterdam	Budapest	Hong Kong	Munich	Shanghai
Antwerp	Casablanca	Istanbul	New York	Singapore
Bangkok	Doha	Jakarta (associated office)	Paris	Sydney
Barcelona	Dubai	Johannesburg	Perth	Tokyo
Beijing	Düsseldorf	London	Prague	Warsaw
Belfast	Frankfurt	Luxembourg	Riyadh (cooperation office)	Washington, D.C.
Bratislava	Hamburg	Madrid	Rome	Yangon
Brussels	Hanoi	Milan	São Paulo	

Allen & Overy means Allen & Overy LLP and/or its affiliated undertakings. The term **partner** is used to refer to a member of Allen & Overy LLP or an employee or consultant with equivalent standing and qualifications or an individual with equivalent status in one of Allen & Overy LLP's affiliated undertakings.

Nothing in this publication constitutes legal or other professional advice from: Allen & Overy LLP and/or any other partnerships, corporations and undertakings which are authorised to carry the name "Allen & Overy"; any of Allen & Overy's partners or members of staff; or any other contributor to this publication.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of: Allen & Overy; any other partner or member of staff of Allen & Overy; any other contributor to this publication; or Allen & Overy's clients.