Sidley Africa-Asia Agricultural Enterprise Pro Bono Program

Pro bono legal services enhancing trade, market access and development

- Working with small- and medium-agribusinesses and development NGOs in Africa and Asia that employ, provide services to or purchase commodities from smallholder farmers

- Goal is to enable poorest farmers to improve their market opportunities and increase their incomes

Pro bono legal services enhancing trade, development and investment

- Our lawyers provide advice on international trade, intellectual property, negotiating investments and financing
- Ultimate beneficiaries are smallholder farmers and farm workers, particularly women, who labor at the bottom of the food chain

Eligibility criteria

- Be based in Sub-Saharan Africa or less-developed countries in Asia
- Be unable to afford or otherwise access international legal services
- Possess the greater goal of benefitting poor farmers, fisherfolk and rural women
- Agree to secure local counsel to address issues relating to local law

Types of Clients under Sidley Program

- Small and medium agribusinesses – initial processors, seed producers, input merchants
- African- and Asian-based NGOs working for small farmers
- Agricultural farming co-operatives representing a number of small farmers
- African & Asian micro-finance entities

African Pro Bono Clients

- 60 clients in 18 African countries and 6 Asian countries

- 260 lawyers involved in the program

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Involving law students on project teams

- Working with law and business students for more flexibility and added expertise to client teams

- Currently working with:

  LLM students from New York University School of Law

  International Relations students from the Graduate Institute in Geneva, Switzerland

  Individual students from other US law schools

Collaborating with development funds and international development organizations

- Collaborating with development funds who refer their investees to us
- Africa: Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund based in Kenya that works with social enterprises in Africa
- Asia: Insitor Management based in Cambodia invests in start-ups and early-stage businesses that work with low-income families

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Involving In-house counsel at Sidley client companies to provide them with pro bono opportunities internationally

- In-house counsel are invited to participate in Sidley pro bono teams
- In-house counsel at Sidley client companies are often looking for opportunities to do pro bono work, especially outside the US where such opportunities are not readily available
- In-house counsel can often add valuable sector expertise, as well as their general legal acumen and pro bono enthusiasm

How It Works

Process

- Approval of eligibility/CDD
- Engagement letter
- Recruitment of team
- Introductory call with the client

Local Counsel

- Sidley lawyers work with local counsel to cover jurisdictions outside of our expertise

To discuss in further detail, please contact:

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