

# **New Perimeter and International Pro Bono at DLA Piper**

## **Synopsis:**

New Perimeter is a non-profit affiliate established in 2005 by the DLA Piper law firm. Its goal is to identify, develop and operate international pro bono legal service projects drawing on lawyers competitively selected from all of the law firm's offices. The New Perimeter model is outlined in this discussion, and descriptions of projects undertaken to date as well as probable locations for future projects are included.

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Shortly after the 2005 merger which produced what has subsequently grown into the largest international law firm in the world, DLA Piper created New Perimeter, a non-profit affiliate, to provide pro bono legal support for projects of global concern. Each of the partner firms to the DLA Piper merger had already demonstrated commitment to its own national pro bono or corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs – this orientation had, in fact, been a critical consideration in determining that the cultural mix among the firms would work – but the merger provided the impetus to create a new and special entity to impact problems of overarching concern including health care, hunger, housing, economic development, law reform, and human rights. Just as the dimension of the law firms' merger had been unique, so was the birth of New Perimeter as the new firm's provider of pro bono legal service for globe-spanning projects.

New Perimeter is best understood in the context of DLA Piper's total pro bono and CSR commitment. At any given time in the United States, DLA Piper has more than 1,500 domestic pro bono matters open for attorneys who work to resolve legal issues affecting individuals, groups and organizations. Among these matters have been included 14 large U.S. Signature Projects taken on in partnership with non-profit organizations, academic institutions, foundations, and corporate clients to ameliorate systemic deficiencies in juvenile justice, adoption, special education, home ownership rights, domestic violence, veterans' needs, and more. In DLA Piper offices outside the United States, attorneys have regularly given a portion of their time to providing both legal pro bono services as well as participating in non-law CSR activities. In 2007, throughout the world, DLA Piper donated more than 130,000 hours of attorney time, valued at more than US \$60 million, to pro bono and CSR projects. Associates at DLA Piper US receive billable hour credit for the first 100 hours of pro bono time which they complete annually. Further information about DLA Piper's exciting pro bono and CSR programs can be found at [www.dlapiperprobono.com](http://www.dlapiperprobono.com) and at [www.dlapiper.com/global/aboutus/](http://www.dlapiper.com/global/aboutus/).

Upon its creation in 2005, DLA Piper US granted New Perimeter the authority to use 13,000 attorney hours annually to undertake global pro bono legal services projects. Additionally, a modest budget to cover project development costs was provided, along with staff support which has now grown to include a part-time Director and Deputy Director (each also a DLA Piper partner), two counsel, and a program coordinator. A 15-member Advisory Board comprised of experts drawn from the international judiciary, academia, diplomatic corps, law, client firms, and NGO leadership meets twice yearly to review New Perimeter projects and plans, and to share their ideas on challenging future directions.

New Perimeter's initial model foresaw a roster of five international projects which would be active simultaneously, with double that number in one phase or another of development. It was thought that a project would be completed within a two-year time period, using the talents of a team of up to 10 attorneys recruited and selected competitively from all over the firm, working an average of 250 hours each per year, both in the U.S. as well as at the project site outside the U.S. Three years of experience under this protocol have demonstrated the basic wisdom of the initial model, but have taught that increased effectiveness can be gained by accepting a more flexible time limit, both for the project itself, as well as for individual attorney contributions to it. The initial project model also supposed that every project would have another partner organization capable of sharing a portion of the travel expenses required for lawyers to perform the required on-site work. In fact, the work done to date by New Perimeter has revealed that projects involving societies and organizations taking the first steps toward their goals often are too young to have the track record critical to winning such partners, and offering pro bono legal services can produce many more costs for New Perimeter beyond the attorney hours donated.

New Perimeter focused its initial work in Southern Africa and the Balkans. Projects currently in development will likely lead to DLA Piper's expanding its international pro bono activities into the West Bank, Peru, Mexico, Rwanda, Hungary, Ukraine, Nepal and additional countries in Africa. Specific projects in these places are currently well along in their development, although certain important details remain to be determined.

New Perimeter projects launched since the program's beginning in 2005 include:

- **Climate Change Project:** The Climate Change Project aimed to enable small groups of subsistence farmers in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to generate and sell carbon credits

through intentional afforestation and reforestation of non-producing land. These carbon credits can be sold to several different entities to offset greenhouse gas emissions, and thus provide long-term revenue for the small group farmers. DLA Piper attorneys worked with the International Small Group and Tree Planting Program (TIST) and the International Women's Human Rights Clinic at Georgetown University Law Center to resolve complex legal issues facing these farmers including land tenure and ownership issues, gender equality and the contractual mechanisms needed to create and protect the rights of farmers in generating and selling the carbon credits to customers worldwide.

- **Kosovo Project:** DLA Piper began work in 2005 to assist Kosovars in conjunction with the UN Mission in Kosovo, the National Center for State Courts, the US government and the Council of Europe in drafting laws creating an independent judiciary and system of prosecution. The mission of DLA Piper lawyers was not to impose points of view on the Kosovars but to help them define their new legal system. Along with assistance in legislative drafting, DLA Piper lawyers provided training on legislative drafting, advocacy and ethics to lawyers in the newly created Kosovo Ministry of Justice. As the draft laws moved through the legislative process, DLA Piper was asked to return to Kosovo to help ensure passage of the legislation and to provide ongoing training and support to the Ministry of Justice and to the bodies now charged with administering the independent judiciary and prosecution systems.
- **Earth Institute Millennium Cities Project in Ghana and Malawi:** Working with the Earth Institute at Columbia University, the African Millennium Cities Project focused on

identifying the legal/regulatory and practical impediments to foreign direct investment in two African cities: Blantyre, Malawi and Kumasi, Ghana. DLA attorneys analyzed the investment regulatory framework and produced a white paper for each city for the benefit of government officials and potential investors. The firm will also co-sponsor a conference in London later in 2008 to focus on these and other outcomes of the Millennium Cities studies.

- **University of Addis Ababa Law School Project:** The Addis Ababa Law School was founded in 1950 and further developed with the assistance of American academics and the Ford Foundation during the 1960s. Having begun a downward spiral following the Derg takeover of the government in the 1970s, the Addis Ababa University Law School arrived at 2007 in dire straits. The President of Addis Ababa University, its Law Faculty and the Ethiopian Government requested that New Perimeter and Northwestern University Law School undertake a project to assist the Law School in curriculum development, expansion of its research capability, and the rebuilding of its law library. Following preliminary meetings in Addis Ababa and careful project planning, the project began in 2007 and has included having DLA Piper, Northwestern Law School, and Accenture provide law faculty to teach short courses, primarily in areas relating to economic development. Work was begun with the Law School to expand both its hard volume and data base library collections; provide expanded opportunities for Addis Ababa Law Faculty to obtain further training in the US and elsewhere; and aid the Faculty in creating a Research Center as well as continuing training to existing Ethiopian lawyers. DLA Piper has worked with the Addis Ababa Law Faculty to organize a conference in Addis Ababa on Ethiopia's current economic investment opportunities to take place in November 2008.

- **The Global Fund:** DLA Piper lawyers helped the Geneva-based Global Fund to establish its Office of Inspector General, conduct fraud and abuse investigations, and review its overall risk management program. All of these tasks were crucial because the Global Fund provides billions of dollars in grants worldwide to reduce HIV-AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, with many grants going to countries where the risks of corruption, fraud and abuse are high. Along with these assignments, a DLA Piper associate was seconded to the Global Fund legal department in Geneva for more than four months to assist the legal staff in processing a multitude of grant requests in a short period of time.
- **The Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC):** New Perimeter attorneys provided major assistance to the newly-founded Southern Africa Litigation Centre in Johannesburg. Lawyers from the firm's UK offices prepared a Litigation Manual on conducting constitutional and human rights litigation in Southern Africa, while attorneys from the firm's US offices provided assistance to the Centre's operations and case-specific support on several important human rights litigation matters in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Zambia and elsewhere. Two of the firm's attorneys rotated extended stays to provide continued presence in the SALC office until the project was completed.
- **Global FoodBanking Network:** New Perimeter lawyers supported the creation and operation of a multinational non-profit hunger relief organization focused on the development of national networks of food banks and stronger international food banking.

Work for the GFN included corporate formation and governance, tax work and assistance with various contracts.

- **CHF International Micro-Lending Project:** New Perimeter attorneys assisted CHF International with its micro-lending program to stimulate entrepreneurial activity in developing countries. Activities included the examination of legal structures of the 11 micro-lending institutions of CHF, as well as exploration of methods of creating sustainable funding options for these programs.

For further information on New Perimeter, please visit [www.newperimeter.com](http://www.newperimeter.com) or contact New Perimeter Director Sheldon Krantz at +202.799.4508 in Washington, DC.

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