TrustLaw, Thomson Reuters Foundation

TrustLaw is the world's largest pro bono legal network, run by the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Working with leading law firms, TrustLaw facilitates free legal support, research and resources for civil society organisations, social enterprises and independent media in almost 190 countries. By encouraging the practice of pro bono worldwide, they enable fairer access to the law to uphold human rights. This interview was held with Maria Alejandra Hoschoian, Senior Programme Manager, Global and Impact Lead, and Joanita G Britto Menon, Senior Legal Programme Manager, Asia.

How would you measure the impact of the work that you do as an organisation?

The Foundation aims to build 'Theories of Change' (TOC) per strategic area of work to then translate them into monitoring and evaluation (M&E) initiatives. At TrustLaw, we sit at the 'Access to Law' area and have a TOC with three key objectives: 'Advancing Pro Bono', 'Strengthening Civil Society' and 'Safeguarding Independent Media'. We have outcomes we want to achieve for each of
those objectives, which are linked to our interventions. With this framework, we intend to track the results of our work and the performance of our interventions systematically to inform learnings, improvements and strategic decisions.

Our ultimate objective is the public or common good. We look at impact internally and externally (ie, with regard to our organisation and with regard to our clients). In particular, we look at where our involvement can be most effective/efficient in having an impact. To us, only using hours to measure our impact seems incongruous with that approach. We recognise that there needs to be regional context in what is measured, because the underlying situations and perspectives differ from region to region.

How do you measure the impact of the pro bono lawyers who volunteer with your organisation?

We look at the level of achievement of the client's objective. We also look at the monetary value of the work, which we see as being equal to the savings for the client. For example, for a non-governmental organisation (NGO), that means more money to spend on their social mission instead. Much of the impact measurement that we do involves client case studies, as well as qualitative and quantitative surveys.

How do you measure the impact of the pro bono work done through your network?

For years, the best way we had to track the impact of our work was by sending final feedback e-forms to our members to learn more about what the results were. This approach was not giving us all the information we needed, so we are now building a new M&E framework to more strategically gather the data we need. One method we plan to adopt is, selecting a sample of cases to follow up via interviews. We also use Salesforce reports that track how many and what type of pro bono connections we are generating.

> *"We're not the ones doing the direct legal work, but just the fact that we're able to even facilitate the possibility is what makes all the difference at the end of the day.*

Who is your audience for the results of these measurements?

On one hand, we measure to be able to improve our work, so 'internal' is the first audience. On the other hand, we also want to share key learnings with our network, so we publish impact stories, interviews, testimonies and resources on our website, hoping they will also help our external audiences. We know results are also useful to legal members, who want to better understand their pro bono contribution over the years. That is why, we are working on ways to systematise how we share important feedback with them.

Are there methodologies of impact measurement that you would like to use (especially those that are qualitative) but do not, because they are burdensome or raise issues of confidentiality, etc?

We prefer to ask more open, substantive questions, and are aspiring to do more of that, better. Measuring impact in the ways we want is a challenge, particularly because we are working with around 900 pro bono connections per year and we do not receive the information on impact firsthand. This leads to delays in identifying the impact and is driven entirely by our follow up with the beneficiaries and service providers.