

# Protecting Legal Rights in Zimbabwe through Partnership Development

*IBJ strengthens national pro bono culture*

*IBJ-mobilized lawyers took on 108 pretrial detainee cases between December 2009 and October 2010.*

In 2010, IBJ increased resources on the ground in Zimbabwe and reached out to local civil society organizations to strengthen the country's overall pro bono culture. With the recruitment of an additional Legal Fellow in June 2010, IBJ's Harare-based DRC became a crucial legal hub for the entire nation. Supported by the tireless efforts of 68 volunteer lawyers and stocked with reference materials relating to both human rights and criminal law generously provided by BookAid International, the DRC significantly contributed to the 35% increase in volunteer criminal defense representation since October 2009.

The success of the DRC led to increased cooperation with local civil society groups like the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) and the

Law Society of Zimbabwe (LSZ). With additional infrastructure support from the LRF and a push to influence pro bono policy by the LSZ, IBJ strengthened its Zimbabwe program as a force for positive change.

In support of IBJ's efforts to empower individuals, as well as to effect high-level policy change, IBJ-mobilized lawyers took on 108 pre-trial detainee cases between December 2009 and October 2010. In all of these cases, an IBJ lawyer was able to meet with the accused within 48 hours of receiving the case. The result was an improvement in access to quality counsel throughout Zimbabwe's overcrowded prison system. IBJ is working with the LRF, LSZ, and the Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation

of Offenders (ZACRO) to develop nationwide strategies to increase the reach of this program. In addition, IBJ has partnered with Care at the Core of Humanity (CATCH) in the representation of juveniles accused of crimes.

IBJ continued its legal trainings for criminal defenders in 2010, holding two legal trainings and five roundtable discussions designed to train practitioners on best practices for enhancing access to justice. Key skills development, including workshops on client interviews and building a theory of the case, led to a 42% increase in IBJ-trained lawyers meeting the minimum competency standards in representing accused persons and an astonishing 81% increase in preventing the use of coerced statements and illegally obtained evidence in criminal proceedings.

## JUSTICE FACTS: Zimbabwe

**Rule of Law:** 0.9/100

**2010 Prison Population:**  
15,000,  
121 per 100,000



IBJ Fellow Innocent Maja (right) and Legal Fellows John Burombo and Pamela Chiwara pointing to IBJ rights awareness posters outside a courthouse

## “IBJ is doing a great thing, particularly in Zimbabwe”

“IBJ is doing a great thing, particularly in Zimbabwe, where the majority of people cannot access the justice system,” says Everson Chatambudza, a Zimbabwean attorney.

Everson, an attendee of IBJ’s 2009 and 2010 trainings in Zimbabwe, credits these trainings with teaching him how to effectively cross-examine witnesses. He explains, “As criminal lawyers, trial is one of the most critical



Zimbabwean attorney Everson Chatambudza

aspects of our profession. Without that act of cross-examination, you won’t succeed.”

Everson’s passion for criminal law is a result of growing up in a rural area “where there was a lot of oppression of rights.” He explains that in rural areas it is not uncommon for people to be “incarcerated for stealing a chicken worth less than a dollar. That is gross abuse of human rights.”

He is a strong believer in the work IBJ is doing in Zimbabwe because it both equips lawyers with skills to effectively represent their clients and provides them cases to explore these new skills. Everson plans to “continue to participate in [IBJ’s] project” because he believes it is “very helpful to the lawyers, to our clients, and to society at large.” He observes that in Zimbabwe “few organizations are doing” the work IBJ is doing, so “the least” his fellow lawyers can do is support that work.

Everson urges young Zimbabwean lawyers to dedicate part of their time to representing poor criminal defendants “to ensure justice is done in society.” He believes that “sometimes our profession is more important than money.” He explains that while he has taken many cases without payment, he has derived “the satisfaction that I have liberated someone. To me, that is something that is very, very important.”

Photo courtesy of Adam Schwarz

## IBJ Launches Twin eLearning Initiatives

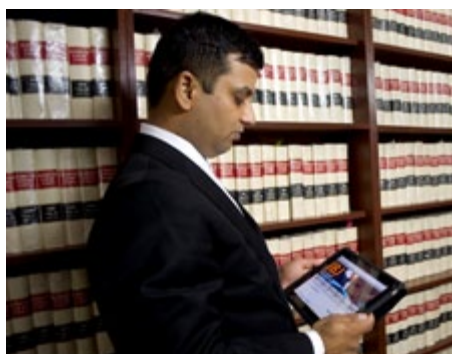
A technology revolution is sweeping the globe. New approaches to communication and information management have profoundly altered the way institutions function. Lawyers in developed countries take instantaneous access to legal resources for granted, while lawyers in developing countries still cannot find even the most basic resources like penal and procedural codes. In 2010 IBJ responded to this global imbalance by launching two interrelated services: the Legal Training Resource Center and the Criminal Defense Wiki.

### *Legal Training Resource Center*

The Legal Training Resource Center ([elearning.ibj.org](http://elearning.ibj.org)) offers on-demand web-based eLearning courses that give lawyers the crucial skills necessary to represent defendants in the criminal justice system. These eLearning courses present defenders with multimedia training on the basic tenets of criminal defense, focusing on skills applicable worldwide that teach lawyers how to protect their clients’ rights. The curriculum provides relevant training on domestic laws relating to criminal procedure in target countries, enabling defenders to understand the implications their domestic statutes have for the practice of criminal law. The site currently offers specific courses targeted to IBJ’s country programs in Burundi, China, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe, as well as general courses on cross-examination, opening statements, and safety-awareness. Since the launch of the LTRC, more than 600 lawyers have registered to take a course and the site has received over 4,500 visits from 130 countries.

### *Criminal Defense Wiki*

Following the launch of the Legal Training Resource Center, IBJ piloted another important eLearning initiative by creating the world’s first Wiki dedicated exclusively to global criminal defense practice. This new site, the Criminal Defense Wiki ([defensewiki.ibj.org](http://defensewiki.ibj.org)) was created using the same



IBJ Fellow Ajay Verma viewing IBJ’s eLearning site

software behind Wikipedia, thereby creating an easy-to-use platform that facilitates the creation and discussion of global criminal defense practices. The site provides easy access to comparative criminal procedure and standards, thereby introducing lawyers to best practices of criminal defense systems from around the globe. In 2010, more than 70,000 individuals from over 206 countries around the world visited the site, and the numbers of visitors continues to grow each month. In 2011, IBJ will work to expand the number of pages and translate the most frequently visited pages into Arabic, French, Khmer, Mandarin, and Spanish.

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Photo courtesy of Tushar Kantil Mandali