Our Firm

We help our clients manage legal complexity and unlock opportunity in Africa.

We have an enviable track record of providing legal services to the highest professional standards in Africa. We work for clients across numerous African jurisdictions on corporate, finance, competition, taxation, employment, technology and dispute resolution matters.

With eight offices in six African countries and over 400 specialist lawyers, we draw on our unique knowledge of the business and socio-political environment to advise clients on a wide range of legal issues.

Everywhere we work, we offer clients a service that uniquely blends expertise in the law, knowledge of the local market, and an understanding of their businesses. Our aim is to assist clients to achieve their objectives as smoothly and efficiently as possible while minimising the legal and regulatory risks.

Our clients include domestic and foreign corporates, multinationals, funds and financial institutions, across almost all sectors of the economy, as well as state-owned enterprises and governments.

Our expertise is frequently recognised by independent research organisations. Most recently, our Kenyan practice won the 2022 Chambers Africa Award for Law Firm of the Year in Kenya. In 2022, Bowmans won six IFLR Africa Awards including overall M&A Team of The Year; Jurisdictional Firm of the Year: South Africa; Loans Firm of the Year: South Africa; M&A Firm of the Year: South Africa; and Project Finance Firm of the Year: South Africa. We also advised on the deal named M&A Deal of The Year. At the 2022 Africa Legal Awards, we won four practice awards including Banking and Finance Team of the Year; Capital Markets Team of the Year; Tax Team of the Year and Transportation and Infrastructure Team of the Year.

In the 2021 DealMakers Africa Awards we ranked first in East Africa for both deal value and deal flow and also advised on the deals named East Africa Deal of the Year and East Africa Private Equity Deal of the Year. In the 2021 DealMakers Awards we placed first by deal flow and second by deal value in the Unlisted M&A Transactions category; first by deal flow and third by deal value in the BEE Deals category; third by value and flow respectively, in the Listed Company M&A Transactions category; and fourth by deal value and deal flow in the General Corporate Finance category.

Our Presence in Africa

Recognising the size and enormous diversity of Africa, our approach to providing legal services across the continent is intended to offer on-the-ground advice in the countries that matter for our clients. Our presence in Africa is always evolving to meet the changes that are shaping the future of this vast continent.

Currently, we have our own offices in six African countries: Kenya (Nairobi), Mauritius (Moka), South Africa (Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg), Tanzania (Dar es Salaam), Uganda (Kampala) and Zambia (Lusaka).

We work closely with our Bowmans Alliance firms in Ethiopia (Aman & Partners LLP) and Nigeria (Udo Udovm & Belo-Osagie). These are two of the leading corporate and commercial law firms in their jurisdictions.

We have a special relationship with a competent practitioner in Mozambique. We also have a non-exclusive co-operation agreement with French international law firm Gide Loyrette Nouel that provides our clients access to assistance in francophone west and north Africa. The arrangement provides complementary access for Gide’s clients and lawyers to markets in central, southern and eastern Africa.

We ensure that, whenever our clients need legal advice in other parts of Africa, we can assist them by tapping into our comprehensive database of contacts of the best firms and practitioners across the continent.

On the global front, Bowmans has long-standing and excellent relationships with a range of international law firms with whom we often work on Africa-focused client mandates. We are also a member firm of Lex Mundi, a global association of more than 160 independent law firms in all the major centres across the globe. Lex Mundi gives us the ability to connect our clients with the best law firms in each of the countries represented.
Our East Africa Intellectual Property Practice

With a robust historical economic growth rate and a middle class population of over 35 million, East Africa remains the investment destination of choice for investors seeking to expand operations into Africa. The entry of multiple brands into the region has made the ability to register and protect the rights that investors and clients obtain in their products, services and brands an essential success component in the business environment.

Securing a knowledgeable and experienced legal adviser who understands the local complexities with the appropriate track record in navigating through the legal landscape is pivotal to this success.

Working as one team coordinated across three jurisdictional offices, our unparalleled dedicated East Africa Intellectual Property (IP) Practice handles:

- IP litigation focusing on trademarks, patents, designs and copyright infringement;
- multi-jurisdictional anti counterfeiting actions/raids;
- Trademark oppositions and expungement matters in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda;
- Design and patent revocations;
- Brand migration advice;
- IP due diligence;
- Franchising; and
- Competition and IP opinions.

We act for clients both locally and internationally under the Madrid and ARIPO systems of registration and help them with national protection in other countries worldwide through a network of associate agent law firms.

Our clients include leading multinationals from around the world within the financial services, manufacturing, pharmaceutical and healthcare, and technology, media and telecommunications sectors.
Our Signature Matters

Our recent experience includes acting for/advising:

Commercial IP transactions
• Kansai Plascon Africa Ltd in relation to their IP rights as a result of the acquisition of a 100% of Sadolin Paints. (Kenya and Uganda).
• ABB in the disposal of certain brands in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and Swaziland.
• Various brand owners and licensees in respect to franchising, distribution and licensing arrangements, both within Kenya and within East Africa.

Filing, prosecution and strategy transactions
• AGIRA on trademark strategy and processes relating to Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda.
• Cowbell on the filing of 20 trademarks under the international registration system known as Madrid. The designated countries include: Botswana, the European Union, Ghana, India and Madagascar. We continue to maintain the portfolio of some of the outstanding trademarks.
• Diageo Brands B.V. in opposition to the registration of the BLUE LABEL trademark.
• Equity Bank Ltd on the strategy and design portfolio of 21 brands in seven countries (with a possibility of up to 17 countries) across Africa.
• Equity Bank Ltd on the strategy to be followed and filing of over 35 trademarks in seven countries in Africa, including: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zanzibar. We continue to maintain the portfolio.

IP litigation
• Budweiser Budvar National Corporation in a trademark dispute over the BUDWEISER trademark. (Tanzania)
• CIPLA before the Pharmacy & Poisons Board and the Anti-Counterfeit Agency for breaches of its intellectual property. (Kenya)
• Disney Enterprises Inc. in an infringement of the MICKEY MOUSE logo mark and the ULTIMATE SPIDERMAN and device mark. (Kenya)
• Google Inc. in opposition proceedings relating to its BEBAPAY trademark. (Kenya)
• Kansai Plascon (U) Ltd in an ongoing suit brought against Regal Paints (U) Ltd for trademark infringement and passing off. (Uganda)
• KCB Bank in a copyright and trademark infringement and passing off suit filed by Newton Oiree Nyambanga. (Kenya)
• Marriott Hotels in a trademark infringement matter involving the MARRIOTT trademark. (Kenya)
• Nairobi Java House Ltd in a High Court Civil Appeal following the decision of the Registrar following trademark opposition proceedings in Kampala. (Kenya and Uganda)
• Proctor & Gamble (PG) in an advertising dispute against Unilever who argue that PG's television and billboard detergent advertising campaign contravened the Code of Advertising Practice and Direct Marketing published by the Advertising Standards Body of Kenya. Unilever argues that the campaign amounts to comparative advertising and is without substantiation. (Kenya)
• Scotch Whisky Association in a trademark dispute over McKenzie Royal Whisky. (Tanzania)
• Sony Corporation in a High Court appeal against a ruling of the Assistant Registrar that allowed the Applicant's mark to proceed for registration. (Kenya)
• Tiffany & Company, a premium luxury jewellery brand, in cross-border IP litigation. (Tanzania)
• UBERR B.V. in High Court Civil Case S56 of 2016. Kanuri Ltd v Uber B.V. This case seeks to establish contractual rights of parties in a service agreement and the ability of a party to change terms at its own discretion where provided for by contract. (Kenya)
• Viacom International Inc. in opposition proceedings against Glitz Entertainment Ltd in a trademark dispute over the mark UNPLUGGED. (Tanzania)

Anti-counterfeit
• ADIDAS GmbH in filing a counterfeit action before the Kenyan Anti-Counterfeit Agency resulting in the successful raid, seizure and destruction of a consignment of counterfeit products at the Port of Mombasa that were infringing on the protected trademark rights of ADIDAS.
• Caterpillar Inc. in a successful anti-counterfeit enforcement covering Mombasa and Nairobi.
• Diageo Brands B.V. and East Africa Breweries Ltd in a counterfeit complaint on Johnnie Walker Black and Red Label in Rwanda.
• Glaxo SmithKline (GSK) in filing a counterfeit action before the Kenyan Anti-Counterfeit Agency and the Commissioner for Customs resulting in the successful raid, seizure and destruction of a consignment of counterfeit products infringing on the protected trademark rights of GSK.
• Wahl Clipper in a countrywide counterfeit enforcement against traders dealing in counterfeit products bearing the Wahl trademark.
Gaming, fintech and related transactions

- Airbnb Payments UK Ltd on the viability of, and regulatory landscape applicable to, improved functionality on their payments platform.
- Bacardi and Lewis Silkin LLP on the MARTINI online competition and the terms and conditions for the MARTINI 150 moments promotion.
- A leading bank listed on the Nairobi Stock Exchange in developing novel e-commerce agreements aimed at incorporating complex technology systems into their daily banking, payment and transaction functions.
- Fish & Richardson P.C. on behalf of their client Intel Corporation on betting and gaming laws and regulation, data protection and privacy laws in Kenya.
- Inventure Mobile Ltd (Tala) on the viability and regulatory landscape applicable to a consumer credit product, including drafting product terms and conditions.
- Reed Smith on behalf of their client E-Prize and Intel Corporation on betting and gaming laws and regulation, data protection and privacy laws in Kenya.
- Segovia Technology on the viability and regulatory landscape applicable to an advanced money remittance service.
- Simplice Bile Anoh on the setting up of a digital betting company.
- Visa on betting and gaming laws and regulation, data protection and privacy laws in Kenya.
AFRICAN LEGAL AWARDS 2022
Bowmans won four practice awards including Banking and Finance Team of the Year; Capital Markets Team of the Year; Tax Team of the Year and Transportation and Infrastructure Team of the Year.

CHAMBERS AFRICA AWARDS 2022
Bowmans’ Kenyan practice was named Kenya Law Firm of the Year and chairman and senior partner, Ezra Davids, was named South Africa Lawyer of the Year.

DEALMAKERS AFRICA AWARDS 2021
Bowmans was DealMakers top dealmaker in East Africa for 2021 by number of M&A transactions worked on. The firm had more than 26% market share and advised on the deal named Deal of the Year.

DEALMAKERS SOUTHERN AFRICA AWARDS 2021
Bowmans placed first by deal flow and second by deal value in the Unlisted M&A Transactions category; and first by deal flow and third by deal value in the BEE Deals category.

IFLR AFRICA AWARDS 2022
Bowmans received a total of six awards including overall M&A Team of the Year; Jurisdictional Firm of the Year: South Africa; Loans Firm of the Year: South Africa; M&A Firm of the Year: South Africa; and Project Finance Firm of the Year: South Africa. The firm also advised on the deal named M&A Deal of the Year.

Accolades

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Band 1
Kenya
Banking & Finance
Corporate/M&A
FinTech Legal
Intellectual Property
Projects & Energy
Real Estate
South Africa
Capital Markets: Debt
Capital Markets: Equity
M&A
Project Development: Energy/Power

Band 2
Africa Wide
TMT
Kenya
Employment
Private Wealth Law

South Africa
Administrative & Public Law
Banking & Finance
Dispute Resolution
FinTech Legal
Media & Broadcasting
Restructuring/Insolvency

Other Notable
Zambia
Financial & Corporate
Project Development

Tier 1
Kenya
Banking & Finance M&A
Project Development: Mining

South Africa
Capital Markets: Debt
Capital Markets: Equity
M&A
Project Development: Energy/Power

Uganda
Financial & Corporate
Project Development

Tier 2
Kenya
Project Development: Energy/Power
Project Development: Infrastructure

South Africa
Banking
Project Development: Infrastructure
Project Development: Mining
Project Finance

Tier 1
Kenya
Banking, Finance & Capital Markets
Commercial, Corporate & M&A
Employment
Real Estate & Construction

South Africa
Commercial, Corporate & M&A
Competition
Employment
Projects & Infrastructure
Shipping & Transport
Tax

Tier 2
Kenya
Dispute Resolution
Privatisation & Projects

South Africa
Banking & Finance
Dispute Resolution
Investment Funds
Mining

Zambia
Leading Firm
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