

An interview with Lex:lead judge Abdallah Gonzi, University of Dar es Salaam

Abdallah—please describe your general background and 1-2 highlights of your career:

I have been a Lecturer in Law at the University of Dar es Salaam School of Law since 2006. I hold a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and Master of Laws (LLM) and am a Practising Advocate of the High Court of Tanzania and Member of the Bar Association of Tanzania Mainland (the Tanganyika Law Society of which I am currently one of the five Trustees of the Advocates Welfare Trust Fund). Further I sit as a Member of the Tax Revenue Appeals Tribunal where I form part of the panel (constituted of two members and a Chairperson) to decide tax disputes appeals.



What in your life has led you to an interest in development and how do you think law can shape positive development trends? What do you think are the most important law and development trends currently?

Generally, since my school days I have been harbouring an interest in development issues. While studying the world geography and history in high school, I learned of development trends across the globe and related the same to the prevailing conditions in my family and the society whereby I developed a keen interest in leadership and development issues. After studying law, I became increasingly convinced that law and development are inextricably connected and that law is not only a by-product of socio-economic development forces in the society, but also a necessary tool to shape development efforts in the proper direction and ultimately bring positive changes to society—hence development. I believe that law as a discipline does not operate in isolation to the social realities. Law has a link to the tangible realities of our society. There are many law and development trends currently including law and technology. So many of the challenges facing the developing countries especially in Africa, can be solved by making use of proper technology. Law is critical to the ideal creation, use, licencing and control of innovations. The earlier our law students learn of the practical roles of the law in the local communities, the better.

When were you first introduced to Lex:lead and what are your thoughts on the initiative?

I was introduced to Lex:lead around 2011. I recall my first University of Dar es Salaam student to win the Lex:lead competition was Masalu Luhula. That happened soon after I accepted to be a contact person for Lex:lead at the University and after my efforts to encourage my students to take part in it. It greatly motivated me to carry on the initiative. I think the Lex:lead essay competition is a great initiative. Students get a chance to relate their legal knowledge to tangible realities in their societies. Their knowledge does not become merely abstract. It prepares them to use their acquired skills to solve development challenges. And they draw lessons from similarly-placed countries all over the world. The spirit of competition and the awards incentive help to motivate and inspire the students to study hard and beyond the prescribed curriculum. This is good for them too.