An interview with Simone Scott-Sawyer

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

I am a born-and-bred Londoner who had the good fortune to move to Sierra Leone at the age of five. I lived there until the age of fifteen and therefore consider myself bicultural. I read law at university and have worked for local government, the Serious Fraud Office and the Commonwealth Secretariat, among others. Two career highlights include being part of the development team responsible for regenerating London's King's Cross area (transformed from an insalubrious borough to home to some of the world's biggest technology companies such as Google and YouTube); and working in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Legal Counsel's office being of service to a third of the world's population.

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?

Having lived in Africa for over ten years, I understand first-hand the need for economic empowerment and development and am greatly encouraged by new systems diverting a proportion of funds generated through remittances to developing countries to the economically disadvantaged. It is also good to see the introduction of legislation to back up the anti-FGM movement in several African countries. We are still a long way from total abolition of this ghastly practice, but it is a step in the right direction.

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

I first met Anne Bodley while working at the Commonwealth Secretariat around three years ago and was immediately struck by the initiative, for one simple reason: I often ask myself, how does one make a difference without getting overwhelmed by the sheer scale of need that exists? Answer: by assisting one person at a time. The Lex:lead initiative goes a step further by getting judges together to make a difference to several students at a time. That's exciting!