Young African Law Students Shape the Future of Africa’s Mining Sector

- Young African law students are changing the way we access data by leading efforts to disseminate Africa’s mining legal frameworks through the African Mining Legislation Atlas (AMLA) project.

Naomi Kakundu is from the small town of Ndola in the copperbelt province of Zambia. In 2014, she was a second year LLB student at the University of Cape Town Faculty of Law, considering whether to take an elective course in mineral law.

In Scotland by way of Conakry, Guinea, Abdoul Karim Kabele-Camara was working on his PhD at the University of Dundee, focused on mining infrastructure development and regulation in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Elsewhere, in Mozambique, Deisy Ribeiro, had begun her first year as an LLB student, and had become interested in mineral law after hearing about her country’s natural resource discoveries and the lack of local professionals needed to meet the capacity needs of companies investing in Mozambique.

Naomi, Abdoul and Deisy joined 11 other students in 2014 to become part of Africa’s next generation of leadership in the mining sector through their role as members of the Legal Research Team of the African Mining Legislation Atlas (AMLA) Project.

The AMLA Project gathers, organizes and disseminates legislation alongside building capacity across the African continent via three main activities: an online platform, providing a free, easily accessible one-stop resource for Africa’s mining legal framework; production of a guiding template, an annotated document outlining legislative solutions to assist in the preparation or revision of African mining laws; and capacity building through training (on-ground and remotely) of African law students in the use of the platform and overall mining law issues.

Initiated by the World Bank Group in 2013, the AMLA Project is a multi-stakeholder initiative, working in close partnership with the African Legal Support Facility, the African Union Commission, several African universities and other global private and public institutions.
Currently, the project has trained 44 African law students, 20 women and 24 men, from 17 countries. Students represent all four regions of the African continent and speak French, Portuguese, Arabic and English.

Starting with an intensive, ten day training, pre-selected students attend sessions on a diverse range of topics impacting the mining sector, from fiscal regimes, licensing and local content to community development, environmental protection and health and safety. Students are introduced to the AMLA platform that is populated with the primary mining codes, regulations and related legislation of all African countries.

The best students from each year’s training are invited to join the Legal Research Team responsible for populating and updating the AMLA platform. Each member is assigned to analyze a minimum of two countries’ mining legislation against a common taxonomy of topics, to encourage comparative analysis, and gives each member the mission to also gather related legislation.

Members rely on each other to answer questions of legislative interpretation and formatting, engaging with one another weekly and often daily via the World Bank Group’s Communication for Development (C4D) online platform. A group of experts in the field are also present on the C4D platform, to guide the students in their research assignments when needed.

Today, Naomi, Deisy and Abdoul remain active as legal professionals in the mining sector. Naomi serves as a reviewer of the Legal Research Team’s research results and is preparing to begin an LLM in Tax Law with a focus on mining tax, while Abdoul serves as a reviewer and Project Coordinator for the AMLA Project at the African Legal Support Facility.

Deisy graduated with distinction in her LLB, has published and lectured on criminalizing the illegal sale of precious stones, and now works as a junior legal researcher at a Mozambican law firm, focused on legal services in oil, gas, mining, energy and infrastructure projects.

“The work of the AMLA legal team not only provides the world with an incredible resource but it also prepares the next generation of African leaders that will develop mining frameworks that foster sustainable development in our countries,” said Abdoul Karim Kabélé-Camara, member of the AMLA Legal Research Team and AMLA Project Coordinator.

The AMLA Project continues to train law students in the use of the platform and mining law in general, and is preparing for its third annual training with 33 African law students in December 2016.

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To learn more about the AMLA, visit www.a-mla.org. Use the website’s feedback functionality to send comments and ask questions.