

Zambian attorney continues the legal legacy of his father



By Brian Cox

Sugzo McBride Dzekedzeke understands that he carries his father's legacy in his hands as he works to expand the reach of the law firm his father started nearly four decades ago.

The Zambian attorney considers the endeavor more than a responsibility — he sees it as a distinct privilege.

Ostoph Dzekedzeke started the law firm of Dzekedzeke & Co. in 1988 in the capital city of Lusaka as a general practice law firm, which most law firms in Zambia still are. The market for legal services in Zambia is not large enough to afford most law firms to specialize, according to Dzekedzeke, who has led the evolution of the eight-lawyer firm into providing services in the areas of dispute resolution, corporate and commercial law, banking and finance, the law of credit and security, intellectual property, and conveyancing.

In addition to his practice, Ostoph Dzekedzeke lectured at the Zambia Institute of Advance Legal Education, which was founded in 1968 to provide training to post-graduate law students.



Sugzo McBride Dzekedzeke enjoys playing chess at a local restaurant and pub. His father taught him how to play and Dzekedzeke has now taught his son.

Dzekedzeke says his father did not pressure him to go into law but allowed him to find his own path in life.

“As you would imagine, he was the first male influence in my life — even though he did not actively participate in encouraging me to study law,” says Dzekedzeke. “He wanted me to make my own decision.”

But Dzekedzeke remembers finding it remarkable how his father seamlessly interwove his profession with his everyday life. The impression stayed with him as he considered a future career.

“My father made it seem so easy and natural,” Dzekedzeke says. “He made it look like it was not real work — like it was just a part of life.”

Having decided to follow in his father's footsteps and become a lawyer, Dzekedzeke earned his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Zambia and a Master of Laws degree from the University of Lusaka. Unfortunately, Dzekedzeke's father died in 2001 and did not live to see his son graduate from law school. But Dzekedzeke knows his father was proud of his achievement.

“He was absolutely proud,” he says. “I know this for sure.”

As proof of his father's pride, Dzekedzeke recalls once during his first year of law school phoning his father in the afternoon. His father took the call and the two chatted for a while before his father said he had to go because he was in the middle of a lecture. Years later, Dzekedzeke was meeting with an older colleague who turned out to have been in the class when he had called his father.

“She told me that my dad was very proud because that one day when I spoke to him on the phone, he went on and on telling his class how good I was doing in law school and how he was proud I was studying to be a lawyer,” says Dzekedzeke.

He was admitted to the bar in 2005.

After graduating from law school, Dzekedzeke followed a piece of advice his father had given him only a few years before.

“He told me that before I settled to work full time at Dzekedzeke & Company, I should work somewhere else and see how it goes elsewhere and gain some outside experience,” says Dzekedzeke.

He followed his father's advice and joined the Zambia Law Development Commission, which is responsible for examining

Zambian attorney continues the legal legacy of his father



Attorney Sugzo McBride Dzekedzeke and his wife, Sheba, with their daughter, Sikhona.

existing laws of Zambia and recommending or facilitating changes in the legal system. Dzekedzeke worked as a research advocate in charge of researching topics that were worth investigating for purposes of amending the law.

“I quickly got bored,” says Dzekedzeke with a smile. “It’s not exactly the lawyering I thought I wanted to do.”

After a year, he joined the Commission for Investigations as a state advocate, investigating complaints from civil servants about government maladministration.

After a year of that work, he quickly grew bored again.

It was time to join Dzekedzeke & Co.

Now with 18 years of experience in dispute resolution, mediation, and settlement, Dzekedzeke focuses his practice on intellectual property law, corporate and commercial law, and conveyancing. His master’s degree is in Intellectual Property.

“I decided on Intellectual Property law many years back because I think I truly was influenced by my father. One time we were together and we bought an IP book and he said, ‘You know, son, the future of law is in IP.’”

Inquiries in the area of intellectual property are common, says Dzekedzeke, especially in the area of trademarks and trademark registration.

The firm’s motto of “Helping Is What We Do Best” captures Dzekedzeke’s vision for the firm.

“I enjoy solving problems in a unique way,” says Dzekedzeke. “I consider that I have special abilities to think outside of the box and to think of solutions to whatever problem is faced by our clients. That is most enjoyable.”

Dzekedzeke sees joining Primerus as part of his overall goals of expanding the firm. He is intent on recruiting additional lawyers to bolster the firm’s influence. He looks for young attorneys who are persistent and undeterred, but he believes leadership is critical to

the firm’s future success.

“At the end of the day, every lawyer knows everything the next lawyer knows,” he says, comparing a firm to a football team. “Every player really knows how to score. But it’s about how you direct them to maneuver through the defenders, the wingers, and know when to be in the right place at the right time.”

Growth is dependent on relationships, he says.

“I tell my staff it’s about your network and how well you network with the circle around you,” says Dzekedzeke. “I tell them wherever there are human beings you need to be ingenious enough to make yourself available as a lawyer and let them know you can do legal work for them if it arises.”

His advice reflects how he saw his father integrate his legal practice into everyday life, making it all appear as though it’s one piece.

Dzekedzeke and his wife, Sheba, have two children — an 11-year-old daughter whose name Sikhona means “We are fine where we are,” and a 14-year-old son named after Shaka Zulu’s father, Sensangakhona, which means “He who acts with good reason.”

“I hope the chap continues to act with good reason as he is growing older,” Dzekedzeke says wryly.

Sheba is a social worker with Youth Alive Zambia, a nonprofit organization that focuses on educating the youth. The family lives in a farmhouse about 30 minutes outside of Lusaka. In his spare time, Dzekedzeke enjoys playing chess at a local cafe – love of the game is another legacy handed down to him from his father.

The law firm, of course, is his father’s finest legacy and Dzekedzeke is determined to enhance its effectiveness and reputation.

“I’m always telling myself that whatever I do, the law firm must be improved,” he says.



Dzekedzeke with his son, Sensangakhona, and his daughter, Sikhona.