



OUR SUCCESS STORIES

From Capacity to Influence Legal Voices

In a rapidly evolving civic space environment in Tanzania, the role of independent legal institutions has become increasingly critical in safeguarding human rights and the rule of law. Recognizing this need, the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) implemented a strategic approach to strengthen the institutional capacity and advocacy influence of Bar Associations particularly the Zanzibar Law Society (ZLS) and the Tanganyika Law Society (TLS) positioning them as credible and resilient actors in legal and policy reform processes.

Prior to the intervention, the Zanzibar Law Society faced critical institutional gaps primarily linked to the absence of a dedicated executive leadership structure. While statutory governance organs were in place, day-to-day operations and strategic coordination were not anchored in professional Secretariat leadership,

resulting in blurred lines between governance and management. Council members were frequently required to assume operational roles, weakening oversight and limiting institutional efficiency.

Through targeted interventions, THRDC facilitated comprehensive institutional capacity strengthening for Bar Associations, including leadership development, governance systems, and advocacy skills. A key milestone in this process was THRDC's facilitation of the recruitment of a professional Chief Executive Officer for ZLS, which significantly enhanced organizational efficiency, coordination, and strategic engagement. This investment in institutional infrastructure enabled ZLS to transition into a more structured and responsive professional body capable of engaging high-level state actors and influencing governance processes.



Figure 1: Show ZLS CEO with ZLS president during meeting with H.E. Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi

“THRDC’s support ranging from targeted capacity building and resource facilitation to strategic linkages enabled the Zanzibar Law Society to recruit a professional Chief Executive Officer. This milestone has transformed ZLS from a fragmented Bar Association into a more structured, coordinated, and influential institution, now better equipped to engage state actors, advance legal reforms, and contribute meaningfully to the rule of law in Zanzibar- Joseph Shaaban Magazi ZLS president.”

The impact of these efforts became evident when ZLS conducted a high-level courtesy visit to the President of Zanzibar, H.E. Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi, marking a significant breakthrough in state Bar engagement. During the meeting, ZLS leadership reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the administration of justice and strengthening collaboration with the government.



Figure 2: His Excellency Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi in a group photograph with the Zanzibar Law Society (ZLS) Leadership

The engagement yielded concrete outcomes, including government commitment to support legal sector initiatives, collaboration on legal aid programmes, and commitment to provide ZLS with land in a strategic area for institutional development. Notably, the President also extended direct institutional support to ZLS through the provision of a minibus to facilitate its operations. This engagement demonstrated increased recognition of Bar Associations as key stakeholders in governance and rule of law processes.



Figure 3: Minibus which handed over to ZLS with His Excellency Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi

Beyond engagement, THRDC's support has strengthened the advocacy capacity of Bar Associations to influence legal and policy frameworks in Tanzania. Through capacity-building on strategic litigation, legal analysis, and policy advocacy, Bar Associations have enhanced their ability to challenge restrictive laws, contribute to legal reforms, and promote accountability. This is particularly significant in a context where legal frameworks such as the NGO Act (2019), Media Services Act (2016), and Cybercrimes Act (2015) have constrained civic space and limited access to justice. Strengthened Bar Associations are now better positioned to respond to these challenges through coordinated advocacy, public interest litigation, and engagement with legislative and executive bodies

Furthermore, THRDC has fostered collaboration between Bar Associations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), creating a unified platform for joint advocacy and policy influence. This collaboration has enhanced evidence-based engagement with policymakers, improved participation in legal reform processes, and strengthened the overall ecosystem of rule of law actors in Tanzania. As a result, Bar Associations are increasingly playing a central role in shaping legal discourse, influencing judicial accountability, and advancing human rights protections for marginalized communities.



Figure 5: Show Bar Association representatives and CSO representatives during the institutional needs assessment report validation



Figure 4: Show the ZLS CEO, second from the left, followed by the ZLS President, third from the left, and the THRDC Zanzibar Coordinator during Law Day

THRDC's strategic investment in institutional strengthening and advocacy capacity has transformed Bar Associations into vibrant, credible, and influential actors within Tanzania's governance landscape. The growing ability of ZLS and TLS to engage high-level government officials, influence policy dialogue, and contribute to legal reform processes reflects a sustainable shift toward a more accountable, inclusive, and rights-based legal system.