



Our September 2021 UDSM Alumna

This is a “light corner” on the UDSM portal intended to feature for one month in turns two among many of the University’s graduates—alumni—since its foundation in 1961. The corner is designed to inform the public and the University itself, without prejudice in terms of historical precedence but guided only by professional information search, on the past graduates of the University, their whereabouts, their current position or engagement, what is remembered of them as past ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ of their time and, finally, on what is reckoned about their contribution to their Alma Mater, their nation, the Africa region and/or the wider world.

Lambertha H. MAHAI (née Ndunguru)



Year of matriculation: 1972

Year of graduation: 1975

Award: B.A. (Hons), The University of Dar es Salaam

More info:

- **MA in Development Studies (Public Policy and Administration), Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, Netherlands, (1987);**
- **Certificate in Education and Social Change [LT-221-206-98/99], DSE Centre for Education Science and Documentation, Berlin (1998–1999).**

An immediately past Director of the National Institute of Adult Education (IAE) in Tanzania, Mrs Lambertha Hyasint Mahai [née Ndunguru] is the University of Dar es Salaam’s ‘Alumna of the Month’ for September 2021. She was born on 4th January 1950 and grew up in Langiro village in Mbinga district, along Lake Malawi (alias Lake Nyasa) in the south-west of Tanzania. As she recalls, she was only lucky to get into the first eight years of her education thanks to a determined and defiant mother, who at that time resisted dominant community pressure not to enrol girl children in school. She attended Langiro lower primary school (from 1958 to 1961), Peramiho girls’ upper primary school in Ruvuma (from 1962 to 1965), Masasi Girls’ (1966–1969) in Mtwara for ordinary-level secondary and Korogwe Girls’ (1970–1972) in Tanga region for advanced-level secondary education.

It was from Korogwe Girls High School that she was selected for a three-year undergraduate study programme at the University of Dar es Salaam (from 1972 to 1975), where she majored in Political Science and Languages. She was awarded a B.A (Hons) in 1975.

Upon successful completion of the degree programme, she was posted to Zanaki Girls Secondary School in Dar es Salaam for a teaching career, where she worked for a total of seven years and a half (1975–1983) and rose to headship of the Kiswahili Language Department. In 1983, she left school teaching and joined the Institute of Adult Education in Dar es Salaam, where she assumed the role of a tutor (lecturer) and researcher in the Institute’s diploma and advanced diploma courses. She participated fully in fieldwork and report writing in connection with adult education training programmes. Her initial job at the IAE was tutoring in the face-to-face diploma and advanced diploma courses. At the same time, she was called upon to perform a whole range of other duties, including coordination of studies in the training department as well as sometimes doubling up as chief administrative officer. As well, Lambertha helped in overseeing processes during the annual examination season. Not infrequently, she would even play secretarial roles at Management and Council meetings to ensure accuracy of reporting. This was in a rare spirit of making the Institute—which had begun as a modest section of the extramural department at Uganda’s Makerere University College in 1960—more dynamic and competitive.

It was at this juncture, in 1985, that she felt that she needed a postgraduate qualification in order to progress and ‘specialise’ in a career. Accordingly, she applied for leave of study, and was granted a sixteen months’ leave to pursue a master’s degree in development studies at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague in the Netherlands. It was, later after return from postgraduate study in 1987, that she was promoted to the position of Head of the Mass Education and Women’s Development Department at the Institute. Seventeen years on, in 2004, she was to be appointed Director of the Institute, in competition with applicants from both within and outside the institution. Previous to this finality, she had been trusted with the position of Deputy Director in charge of academic affairs and Chief Academic Officer (2000–2003). For the period of three years, from June 2014 to May 2017, Mrs Mahai served outside her home area of jurisdiction also as Chairman of the Board of the Tanzania Library Services. She formally retired in 2017, at the level of Director of the Institute and also Senior Lecturer (according to the revised NACTE schemes of service).

It is on record that Lambertha was a first female head of the institution. Her working and service record is confirmed by several recognition awards, including ‘Best Worker Award’, two times at departmental and institutional levels (1992,1999) and once at national level as IAE Deputy Director (2000). She also was selected for a ‘National Leadership Award’ as a chief executive officer by the Research, Academics and Allied Workers Union (RAAWU), among 150 higher learning Institutions (2008). A few of her publications and writings include:

- 2013: Helping Other Women to Become Leaders in Open Schooling. In Asha Kanwar, Frances Ferreira and Colin Latchem (editors), *Women and Leadership in Open and Distance Learning and Development*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Commonwealth of Learning. Chapter 7, Pg. 89-101.
- 2011: Tanzania Country Status Report of Commonwealth of Learning Activities and Plans for Africa. For the focal point meeting in Mauritius.
- 2010: Status of Research in Open Schooling: The case of the Institute of Adult Education. For COMOSA AGM and Pre-Pan-Commonwealth Forum 6 (PC6) and Open schooling research forum, Delhi, India.
- 2009: The Status of Open and Distance Education in Tanzania. For the ADEA workshop in Mauritius.
- 2008: Tanzania Country Status Report of Commonwealth Learning: Activities and Plans. For the African focal point meeting in Malawi.
- 2007: A report on supervision of Pre- and Primary School Teacher Training Implementation of New and Revised Curriculum. Highland Zone, Mbeya.
- 2006: Public-Private Partnership in Literacy Education: The Tanzania Experience. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Lambertha is happily retired from public service since 2017. Nevertheless, she continues to pursue those ‘hobbies of her passion’, namely reading books on education, on innovations and on leadership; networking and information/knowledge sharing; counselling of community youth and women; as well as gardening.



5th-7th October 2011. At a steering committee meeting in Lusaka, Zambia on ‘Open and Distance Learning (ODL)’ methods in adult and life-long learning in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.



August 2014. Talking on the obstacles in adult education in Tanzania at a conference on ‘Voices of Leaders’.

Lambertha H. MAHAI (née Ndunguru) is Our September 2021 Alumna, and her great stories begin here!