SPEAKER 1: Hello and welcome to the Harvard Center for International Development's weekly podcast.

SPEAKER 2: This week, Salimah Samji, Building Safe Capability Program director talks to Anjikwi Mshelbwala who took the PDIA online course offered by the building safe capability program in the fall of 2017. Anjikwi, an ICT officer at ActionAid, talks about his experience applying the insights from the program in his native Nigeria, and describes how the learnings he got from the course have helped him solve complex development problems ever since.

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SALIMAH SAMJI: Hello and welcome to the BSC podcast series of the PDIA course alumni. We offer a free PDIA online course. And currently, we have 1,112 alumni in 86 countries who have taken our course. Today, we have with us Anjikwi Mshelbwala, who is from Nigeria, works for ActionAid. And out of his organization, four teams and 20 individuals have taken the PDIA course over a period of three different terms.

We thought we would start a series so that you can actually get a sense of what is this course? Why do people take it? And what do they get out of it?

So first, I want to welcome you, Anjikwi, to Harvard and to this podcast. And thank you very much for taking the time to share with us your experience.

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: Thank you very much. I am very delighted to be here.

SALIMAH SAMJI: Thank you very much. So I want to start off by asking you-- you took the course in the fall of 2017.

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: That's right.

SALIMAH SAMJI: How did you find out about this course? And what was the reason? Like, why did you take this course?

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: OK, at my office, there were staff that had taken the course earlier. And I was told about it by one of the staff member. And I looked at it and read a little bit about it, building state capability, and that's very relevant to what we do in ActionAid. ActionAid is a development organization, as well as a human rights-based approach organization, which seeks to end poverty. And seeks to have social justice in countries, amongst other things, through its work in health, in education, in governance, as well as in engaging with the local authorities to see that citizens get their rights, and citizens get to participate fully.

So that, with my interest in ICT for development, which is information and communications technology for development, spurred my interest to look a little bit. And also my age-long interest in Harvard University as the best school, or one of the best schools in the world there is, I figured that it will be a worthwhile experience. And it will help me take a step further in increasing knowledge. And also learning how to

solve complex problems that bedevil developing countries. And one of my passion is to see that my country develops and becomes much better than it is now.

SALIMAH SAMJI: I'm wondering if you can walk us through the 15 weeks, right? Our course is a 15-week course. And it is a course for teams. So you and five others took this course. Stayed together for 15 weeks.

Because usually when I say to people, our course is 15 weeks, they say, who has time to do a course for 15 weeks? Don't they have a job? And I was wondering if you could answer that question.

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: Well, it was quite a long stretch, interesting one with our team leader, Suweiba Jibril, who is head of the local race program, so the time we started it, with [? Haijera ?] [? Adamu ?] and with [? Asamu ?] [? Diamen, ?] as well as professor, who we call him professor because he's a real professor at an institution who joined as a partner of ActionAid. We got together and decided we're going to do this. It's going to be a long stretch. It's going to be weekends of work. It's going to be working together, both in the office and sometimes working online, collaborating using WhatsApp or Skype or even telephone calls. So we would load up our phones and make sure that we spent quality time in discussing some of the chapters and our experiences, as well as the challenges that we faced, some of the things that we were not too clear about.

I remember in the beginning, I was a bit lost because I come from an IT background. And so those in the development area were quite well ahead of me. And I had to catch the terms, the terminologies that I used before I got my footing with the support of the rest of the team members.

So I think that the determination, as well as the rewards of both having a certificate and the privilege also of doing it with Harvard University Center for International Development was one of the things that kept us going. And of course, our families would love to see us start something and finish.

SALIMAH SAMJI: What were some of the insights that you gained from this course? Or what were some of the things that still-- this was December 2017, we are now in 2019--

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: Yes.

SALIMAH SAMJI: --what are some things that still stand out to you from what it is that you learned, if any?

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: OK, one of the most interesting things I learned was the Ishichi diagram, the--

SALIMAH SAMJI: Ishikawa diagram.

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: --Ishikawa diagram. That's correct. The fish bone diagram. My favorite meal happens to be fish, so it was quite interesting to learn about it. Being able to, first and foremost, construct the problem and really define the problem that we faced. And to deconstruct it again and to further sort of spread it out on the

table and get to see the various components and the interdependencies that they all had.

And it has been something that we did, probably unconsciously, but didn't know how to organize it and arrange it in the method that building state capability presented it. So it was lovely to have it organized in that way. The AAA analysis, also helped me to understand the different relationships. Or rather, I would say where the authority really lies, and where the abilities of the parties that play.

We took an interesting problem that had to do with the health sector in a rural area, just outside of Kebbi state, one of the states in northern Nigeria. And my visit earlier in the year, sometime in June of 2017, I saw quite a number of things that threw more light to the suffering that people had in the rural areas in the poor and excluded communities.

ActionAid has local rights program that seeks to intervene in that, and also to help the residents to speak up for their rights, as well as speak up for the facility and the amenities they require. So the trip took us. And we saw a primary school. We saw a local health center. And it was really sad, particularly the state of a maternity center, which really almost brought tears to my eyes, that no pregnant woman or expectant mother should go through such a terrible or such a very difficult time without adequate medical facility. As well as the building itself wasn't ideal for-- places like labor room or antenatal or even postnatal care.

And also, the place was quite far away from the nearest general hospital. It took almost two hours going by road, on very rough roads. So that added to, sadly, some of the maternal mortality rates to which, sadly, Nigeria needs to really work on.

SALIMAH SAMJI: Thank you. So you've started to kind of talk about what you've done since December 2017. I was wondering if you can share any specific either examples of using our tools or finding them useful to do something with that you can share with our listening audience.

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: OK. For the, for constructing the problem, I was able to construct the problem along with the team, of course, to find out the real reason why there was limited access to ICT tools for rural and local communities, as well as the problems of internet access. It boiled down to the range. The remote areas, they were quite far away from the nearest masts that could transmit signals.

And the plan for development for those areas was still a long way off in order to bring the facility or the equipment needed to bridge the gap. Also, the budget and the finances was quite difficult for the government to shoulder to buy tools for the government schools and for the schools that are nearby. And a lot of them relied heavily on donations that were given by donor agencies, well-meaning individuals, as well as ActionAid. ActionAid took a step in providing about seven computers in five different local communities in order to provide the basic tools that are required-- projectors, cameras, and internet access via modems.

And we also worked on getting furniture for the classrooms. The local

chiefs in those communities provided the space. Some of them gave up their meeting rooms of their palaces or their community centers in order for these tools to be put in place. So by the time we constructed the problem properly and deconstructed it, already the solutions came in view.

It's interesting to note that the search frame methodology is, in this case, better, or I would say more relevant rather than the log frame methodology. Because we kept learning about the problems and looking at the solutions that we thought would work. And in the end, it changed. Some of them were not relevant again after we did the first iteration, did the second iteration. And we realized that we thought we had a fairly modern problem, but actually, we were back to the 1804 kind of situation. So it was quite exciting, quite interesting.

SALIMAH SAMJI: Great. Thank you very much. Did you have any last words for our audience? This has just been very insightful. As I mentioned to you earlier, we don't often get to see a lot of our alumni and have not met-- maybe we've met 10 of the 1,112. So it is really an honor to be sitting across from one of these alumni.

And as you know, the entire course is online. And you just see videos of people. And you will see our names and emails. But that's the extent of our interaction. So it really is wonderful to have a real live PDIA course alumni in front of us. So any last thoughts you'd want to share with our listeners?

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: Yes, I myself am very delighted and still in awe of the opportunity and the ability to be able to come personally to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the lovely campus of Harvard University is and, of course, the Harvard Center for International Development. I'm also very grateful. I would just mention one, my father, the head of my family, [? Angilem ?] Mshelbwala, who has been a pillar of support. And I'm also very grateful to my mother, Mrs. Mshelbwala.

SALIMAH SAMJI: Wonderful. Thank you so. And what a great way to end this podcast. Thank you very much, Anjikwi.

ANJIKWI MSHELBWALA: Thank you. I am most grateful.

SALIMAH SAMJI: Before I end the podcast, I just wanted to share with all the listeners out there-- I know that the 15-week course might be long for some of you. And that finding a team, because our course is only for teams, might be a little hard depending on where you are. And so I wanted to share another possible resource that you could use. We have PDIA tool kit, which we released in October last year. That is available on our website.

We also have our book that Anjikwi was talking about, Building State Capability and a PDF of the book is downloadable on our website. So both the tool kit and the book are available for download on our website at www.bsc.cid.harvard.edu. Thank you very much.

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