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Interviewee: Dr. Michael Kargbo

Interviewer: Ashley McCants

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Innovations for Successful Societies, Bobst Center for Peace and Justice
Princeton University, 83 Prospect Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey, 08544, USA
www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties

McCANTS: This is Civil Service Interview Number 1 with Dr. Michael Kargbo at the Institute for Public Administration and Management in Sierra Leone. It's August 4th and the interviewer is Ashley McCants.

Thank you so much for agreeing to take part in this interview.

KARGBO: *It's my pleasure.*

McCANTS: We like to begin the conversation by talking about the role you play here working with civil service reform. Can you describe your specific role here at IPAM (Institute for Public Administration and Management)?

KARGBO: *I am Acting Head of Department of the Public Administration Department of IPAM. What I do is basically coordinate training programs, but also try and foster a climate that is conducive to research. IPAM has a triple-mandate. We are set up to train specifically people working in the public sector. But also, to carry out research, and then provide consultant services to government. Basically, we are here to engender effective policy formulation, but also to enable civil servants to simply carry out their basic day-to-day activities.*

McCANTS: How did you become involved in this work?

KARGBO: *I have a Ph.D. in foreign policy, so in the sort of general area of public policy, international relations. I studied at the University of Birmingham in the U.K. (United Kingdom) and I returned home in September 2006. Then, I was recruited by the current Dean of Campus of IPAM. Basically I've been involved with our training programs ever since.*

It's sort of quite fascinating because I'd—last that I was interested in studying was the public sector. But, looking—when I looked at my thesis—my Ph.D. thesis looked at British foreign policy towards the conflict in Sierra Leone. When I looked at the workings of government, how policy is formulated and how policy is implemented, it's actually quite fascinating looking at the British foreign policy towards Sierra Leone. A policy was articulated by the Foreign Secretary and what happened on the ground was something completely different, so that's quite fascinating for me.

McCANTS: Can you just mention briefly some of the jobs that you held before you took on this work in the public—in the civil service area?

KARGBO: *I've basically been a teacher. I've taught in 70 schools, colleges of further education in the U.K., and at the University of Birmingham.*

McCANTS: Have any of these prior jobs prepared you in any way for the challenges you've faced here now?

KARGBO: *Not really, but my experience—my experience researching British foreign policy I think prepared me for what I'm doing now. Because basically I gained an insight into the workings of the British government, which I can say is sort of—kind of model for Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone being a former colony of Britain.*

McCANTS: Can you talk a little bit about the capacity now in the public sector in Sierra Leone and then what it was like maybe when you first started?

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- KARGBO:** *What I have to say—I'm not sort of sure whether there's been a great improvement. But what I can say is that there is now the recognition of the importance of training and also, the need to reform the system.*
- McCANTS:** Can you tell me a little bit about IPAM, how was it founded? Why was it founded?
- KARGBO:** *IPAM was founded by the government with the help of the World Bank to basically, as I said, do three things; sort of what I refer to as triple-mandate, to provide training. Basically to deliver training programs for the public sector, specifically for the public sector.*
- McCANTS:** How long has it been in existence?
- KARGBO:** *IPAM has been in existence since, I can say, about 26 years ago. Although it's sort of gone through several sort of metamorphoses into several stages. But the current buildings were occupied by then what was then referred to as the Civil Service Training College. So, it sort of morphed into an institute that was initially independent and then later on incorporated into the University of Sierra Leone. So, IPAM is an institute of the University of Sierra Leone.*
- McCANTS:** Then it's funded through the University?
- KARGBO:** *No, it's only funded by government. IPAM is a public institution owned by government and by extension, by the people of Sierra Leone.*
- McCANTS:** Obviously, many countries need to build the skills of its civil servants very rapidly because conflict or other things have left many without the knowledge to do their jobs. What skills do you think were most needed when the reform process began here?
- KARGBO:** *For instance, take the case of procurement. A National Public Procurement Authority was set up, necessary legislation passed, and also there is National Budgeting and Accountability Act. All these sort of pieces of legislation were put in place, but then the country as a whole lacked competent people, for example, to be procurement officers. That was where we came in. We've been running procurement courses for the past two years. It's been one of the most popular courses that we do. We train public procurement officers for the local councils. All local councils send people here to train for at least three weeks.*
- We are now offering a post-graduate diploma in procurement management. That's one key area that was quite lacking. Because if you talk about National Procurement Act, but then people don't know how to go about procuring for government, then basically you are wasting your time.*
- Also, very basic IT (Information Technology) skills that we are lacking. It's quite interesting that we are training here a training of trainers that just ended on Friday last week. We discovered that a couple of the participants who are top civil servants, they are training coordinators in their various MDA's (ministries, departments, and agencies), lack the basic skills to operate a computer. In fact, for a number of them, we had to help them with setting up an e-mail account. So, we've sort of intervened in that particular area. We are, for now, we are the only institution that has a Cisco Networking Academy in the whole country, so we do Cisco Networking.*
- McCANTS:** Who kind of pushed for the creation of these kinds of training programs? Did they come from politicians? Did they come from people interested in civil service

reform? Did they come from the international community? Who was driving the development of these programs?

KARGBO: *I have to say that for us, as an institution, it's demand driven. There is the need and obviously then you can say if the international community has pushed for a reform in the procurement area of government, then we can say they actually triggered the idea of training people to be certified procurement officers, you can say that. But for us, we then respond to the needs of—because what we want to do is to provide those sort of skills that are lacking in the public sector. There is no way you can carry out reform without training people. Reform comes together with training.*

McCANTS: In addition to the procurement program that you just described, what other kinds of training programs do you conduct here?

KARGBO: *For instance, we have a Master's in Public Administration, which started two years ago. The first cohort will graduate in December of this year. About 90% of the participants in that program are top civil servants. We have people that are already permanent secretaries in the various ministries. There we offer courses on public administration, governance, leadership, management information systems, human resource management, performance management, international relations, public policy analysis and formulations, to name but a few. There are other options. These basically we provide, particularly in the area of public policy, which is compulsory. It's only now that a lot of them, for instance, it's only now that they know the public policy making cycle from problem identification to evaluation.*

McCANTS: Are most students enrolled here enrolled in that master's program?

KARGBO: *Pardon?*

McCANTS: Are most of the students enrolled at IPAM—are they mostly enrolled in the master's program or are there other programs?

KARGBO: *No, no. We have other programs. We have first degrees, undergraduate degrees in information systems, business administration, accounting, applied accounting and finance. We have financial services and we have a B.Sc. in Public Sector Management, which is now in its second year.*

McCANTS: How many students are here overall?

KARGBO: *You mean all the students at IPAM? We have about 1,600 now.*

McCANTS: In addition to university students, do you train personnel that are already civil servants that come here to get training?

KARGBO: *Yes. We have short-courses, we have a short-courses unit. The short-courses range from about a week to about three weeks, or even a month. So, we have short-courses, sort of people coming out for a week or two and they will take courses on a specific area of management, for example.*

McCANTS: For example?

KARGBO: *Yes, for example, we are going to have a Diplomatic Theory in Practice training program next semester. We have a program, we have a program of training events, and we have a catalogue. We try and encourage as best as possible the*

interaction of the private and public sector. Some of the courses are open to both the public and the private sector. For example, there's a course on Management Development for Confidential Secretaries. So, we have people coming from all over the place, from the public sector and also from the private sector.

McCANTS: What are some of the most popular of those short-courses?

KARGBO: *Short-courses—Human Resource Management is a very popular one. Procurement is a popular one. Management Development and basic IT courses.*

McCANTS: How are those trainees selected? Do they volunteer to sign up or are they sent from their home ministry?

KARGBO: *Well that's quite interesting, because I often refer to what I refer to as "welfare approach to training", wherein somebody says "Oh, you've been a good employee, so I'm nominating you to go for training in the United States or in the U.K." The procedure is that the Establishment Secretary's Office, the STR who is the Secretary for Training and Recruitment, would ask for nominations. Then the various ministries, departments, and agencies would then nominate people and the Establishment Secretary's Office then sends a list to us, and we work on the basis of that particular list. So basically, they nominate.*

For the private sector, they also nominate. We sort of clearly specify the target group. So based on the letter we send to them that we are targeting this particular cadre of employees or workers, they would then look within that sort of target group and then nominate someone.

McCANTS: Can you describe—you spoke earlier about the demand driven nature of trying to design your training program. Can you describe a little bit more about how you identified what was—what kind of training programs were in demand or in need?

KARGBO: *Quite often, for instance, if you take the case of the procurement, people are to be sent to Ghana to sort of study procurement. So we thought, why not offer it locally? Also, the World Bank wanted us to provide training programs in procurement. So, we then decided that there is a need for us to offer it. In the case of IT courses for instance, we all know that we are living in an electronic age, so that one is very clear that both the public and private sectors need training in IT skills.*

But the key thing is our training is not just about acquiring knowledge and skills. Our training is also about changing attitudes. So for us, it's what we refer to as a KSA, which is knowledge, skills, and attitude. You come to us, we are not just here to acquire knowledge and the skills needed to do your job, but also for you to change your attitude towards your job. So for instance, we always say to our—I always say to our students that when they come here they are supposed to go back to not simply be tools of change, but also they should be agents of change.

McCANTS: What do most of the university—the students who are here for their first bachelor's degree—what do you most of them end up going on to do after finishing?

KARGBO: *They work in the private sector. A lot of them would go into banks. If you go to a bank, for example, a bank like Access, which is a quite new bank, about 70% of the employees there are actually graduates of IPAM. There hasn't been—when we started the degree programs, the degree programs were all geared towards the private sector. Because if you think about applied accounting and finance,*

people want to be accountants and accountants, you know, if you go into the public service you will see that there are very few qualified accountants because the public sector doesn't pay well. And in where the B.S. in financial services, again a lot of people go into insurance companies and banks. The B.S. in Business Administration, again people go into the private sector.

It wasn't until three years ago, that we started an undergraduate degree program that specifically targets people that are interested in working in the public sector. So, we have the B.Sc. in Public Sector Management we started about three years ago. We would have the first graduates in two years time—in about three year's time.

McCANTS: Why did you make this change two years ago? Why did you now decide to target people interested in the public sector?

KARGBO: *When we started, we decided that we want to offer a Master's Degree in Public Administration. So, it was then we felt that it's logical that people who are interested in going into the civil service should then have the opportunity to do a first degree in Public Sector Management. Again, it's all about the new drive towards training, the new drive towards what people refer to as the "new public management"; the fact that civil servants nowadays don't need that sort of general training, but they might need some training that is specific to what they are going to do.*

Interestingly, most of the people who that are in the program are not actually working for the public service. Some of them are just fresh from school, others are unemployed, and others are working in other sectors. So, basically we are trying to encourage people that want to—for people to sort of at a very early stage to say, "I want to work in the public sector." But then, you need to make the public sector very attractive for people to want to go and do a program that is sort of geared towards working in the public sector.

McCANTS: Now that you've talked about making it attractive, can you talk a little bit about what is being done for attracting talented people and for retaining them in the public sector?

KARGBO: *As far what I've seen so far, there is sort of that quite controversial Senior Executive Service, which is SES. The SES—what the SES wants to do basically is to open up the civil service, in the sense that I am a head of department here, so if there is a vacancy for permanent secretary say at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I should be able to apply for that job. So, we want sort of a doorway instead of this sort of hierarchical approach towards the civil service, wherein you have to go from the bottom and then you work your way up to the top.*

One major plank of that sort of reform process is to have a Human Resource Management Office, other than what we have now as the Establishment Secretary's Office. So, to move away from simply recruiting and training to actually appraising people - making sure that people are performing. When you talk about accountability, people always refer to accountability of finances. But also, we are talking about accountability of performance and accountability of fairness.

These are sort of the things they want to sort of—values they want to instill into the public service. I've always said that you cannot improve conditions within the civil service without reform. If you want to improve the conditions of—working conditions of civil servants, then civil servants should become agents of change.

Because if—I mean, the wisdom is that if there is change within the system, then you can make a lot of savings that can then be passed on to civil servants in terms of benefits and salaries.

McCANTS: Have you tried other types of incentives, such as offering scholarships to students to come here and then they have to go work in the civil service?

KARGBO: *There is a Sierra Leone government grant, grant [indecipherable], but I'm not sure it's been made conditional upon people going into the civil service. But what I know is that some of the people that are on their master's program are being sponsored by their ministries, departments, and agencies. Again, that's an incentive, but the problem we often have in African civil service or public service, is that quite often we train people and people then go into the private sector. People get the skills that make them very attractive, competitive in the private sector and then they go away. So, the issue of retention is very, very important. That's one of the drivers to make the civil service leaner, because the civil service is supposed to attract the top, the cream. Unfortunately, our civil service has not been able to attract the top; the top would go into the private sector. And even when it attracted the top, the cream, all quite often they would leave because of the poor condition of salaries.*

McCANTS: Once someone completes a degree from here, for example the master's program, do they get higher compensation?

KARGBO: *Not necessarily so. But then, what it does is that—well, first of all the aim is to improve performance. With the SES, if you perform well, then you are sure to rise within the system. We've seen the sort of mad rush of the civil servants to have master's degrees because they want to be very competitive. If they are going to compete with outsiders then they need to have the requisite qualifications that are supposed to enhance the performance, and if they can perform well, then the sky is the limit.*

McCANTS: You talked about the new reform of the SES to make it more about appraising people's performance. Can you describe how that's different from the way it used to be run?

KARGBO: *The current system is that I finish University first degree and I go into the civil service as a cadet officer, with the first degree I go in as a cadet officer. Then as a cadet officer, I then work my way up the ladder up to being Permanent Secretary. Quite often, by the time I get to be Permanent Secretary, I'm probably in my 60's, maybe late 50's-early 60's. The system has been quite hierarchical; you have to work your way up. So you have to work your way up, which means that for you to reach say, the rank of a deputy secretary, you must have spent up like 15-20 years in the service. It has not been based on performance; it has been based on experience and how long you have been in the service.*

McCANTS: How did this kind of reform effort of the service come about? Who was in charge of taking that effort?

KARGBO: *Unfortunately, it's been donor driven.*

McCANTS: Sorry?

KARGBO: *Unfortunately, it's been donor driven.*

McCANTS: Donor driven?

KARGBO: *Yes, it's been driven by DFID (Department for International Development) and I think the World Bank, and other donors.*

McCANTS: Can you—just one more question about the master's program, how many students are in the master's program currently—Master's in Public Administration?

KARGBO: *We have 29 students in the second year and 10 students in the first year.*

McCANTS: You mentioned that people are realizing that they need to be able to compete with others in order to get these jobs. Right now are you kind of employing people from outside of Sierra Leone, from the diaspora, or from international organizations?

KARGBO: *Probably only as technical assistants. These technical assistants are positions that are funded by the EU (European Union), the World Bank, and I think DFID. So it would be almost impossible for me, for instance, to enter the service with the rank that is commensurate to my qualifications and experience because the system is closed.*

McCANTS: What do you mean by that?

KARGBO: *The system is closed in the sense that I have to enter at the bottom and work my way up.*

McCANTS: So, the donors who are driving this reform process; have they—who is now going to implement these changes that they've recommended?

KARGBO: *This current government, they've been working on this reform process for years, and the previous government. In fact, I don't think any progress was made, except the fact that they did some management—some functional reviews in the various ministries. And also, they got some documentation for the future Human Resource Management Office, other than that, they made no progress. This government—this new government, well, it's not new, it's almost a year old now, has made a commitment to take the reform process forward. In fact, it set up a Strategic Policy Unit at the President's office.*

McCANTS: How have sitting civil servants reacted to the introduction of the new reforms?

KARGBO: *Naturally, most of them are against it. Most of them said they are opposed to this particular reform. Some of the people that I have spoken to simply say that the civil service is an organic whole and that if you create a top-tier of civil servants that are going to be well paid and are going to be on-contract, then what you are doing is you are dividing the service. Also, they are saying that bringing people from outside is going to destroy the ethos of the civil service.*

McCANTS: These are the objections?

KARGBO: *These are some of the objections. But in particular, they are very, very much concerned about the creating of a tier-system in the civil service.*

McCANTS: Can you describe what a tier-system is?

KARGBO: *Well, in the sense that you would have a group of top civil servants that are well paid, because the idea is that you get people on-contract, the top—say from*

Permanent Secretary to Deputy Secretary. You get the best people and you pay them salaries or give them incentives for them to perform, and these people are going to be on-contract.

McCANTS: What does “on-contract” mean?

KARGBO: The top—the ones that are recruited from outside, the ones that are going to be the top civil servants. That’s the Permanent Secretaries and the Deputy Secretaries. So, they are going to be—so it is about 10% or 15% of the whole service. These are going to be on a different contract and they are going to be well paid, but then they are basically going to be subject to performance appraisals at the end of every year, and if they don’t perform, they will be sacked.

McCANTS: What do you mean that they are recruited from outside?

KARGBO: Well, in the sense that—well, maybe not from outside, but because it’s open—at the top it’s open. So as I was saying, someone like me with experience in capacity building can apply for the post of Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education or in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For now, it’s not possible, because those jobs are not advertised and old people are promoted. So what we are saying is that with the SES, these jobs will be advertised and then people will go through a normal recruitment process and those who are employed will then be on-contract. Those contracts will be subjected to annual reviews, so performance—sort of appraisals. If you don’t perform well, you will lose your job.

McCANTS: Who will be in charge evaluating the performance of these?

KARGBO: Human Resource Management Office.

McCANTS: Are they developing kind of specific criteria on which to--?

KARGBO: They are. They are sort of developing a whole series of documentations. They are to set up testing centers where they will have to test, people will have to go through the testing process, and also have to, I understand, they have to set up panels that are going to be very much independent. Interview panels that are going to interview perspective candidates and then—they are still, I think they are still working on that. As I said, these are the people that are supposed to actually be working on these reforms, but then they are actually against it, so there’s been some sort of problems along the way.

McCANTS: So, some of those who are supposed to be implementing the reforms are the ones who are resistant?

KARGBO: Yes, quite resistant on this.

McCANTS: Have steps been taken to win their support for the changes?

KARGBO: I think for some of them, it’s actually out of ignorance. Some of them—I asked some people whether they know the basis of the SES, and they struggled. They simply see the SES as trying to get rid of them, particularly at the top, the older ones. They see the SES as a mechanism to get rid of them, so they don’t understand, they don’t understand it. They haven’t even taken the time to read the relevant documentations.

McCANTS: Have any other efforts been made to kind of educate them about--?

KARGBO: *That's why we have the Public Sector Reform Unit in the President's Office, that's supposed to be their role. Also, the future Human Resource Human Management Office also is supposed to explain to them.*

McCANTS: What about the broader community? Is there support for these types of programs or has it been controversial more broadly as well?

KARGBO: *There is always the issue of people losing their jobs. Because for the current top civil servants, what is going to happen is that they will be offered—some of them will be offered incentives to retire, they will be given options to go into other sectors. Also, the reform process also is going to make the service leaner, which means then that you would have to get rid of people that are not really—there are too many people in the civil service that are not required by the service. Even if the people who work in the service are not well paid, the fact that they are receiving 100,000 leones a month goes a long way to sort of solve their problems. So when you have to retrench some workers, then obviously you are going to create a lot of problems, sure problems.*

Some obviously would view that way, they will say it's better for me to go and earn 100,000 than to stay up to not earn anything. So, there are sort of broader social issues that are sort of in a way—but people in general, are not opposed. I don't know whether because how many people actually know what the government is trying to do as far as reform processes concern the civil service? A lot of people are just concerned about trying to get on with the daily lives. When it comes to reform process, very few public people are aware of what's going on.

McCANTS: Are there other kind of reform efforts besides this kind of transition to the Senior Executive Service that are ongoing, especially with regard to training?

KARGBO: *Yes. For instance, they've now developed a code of ethics for the civil service. Although it has not been passed, I don't know, it's supposed to be passed to be sort of implemented. But the fact is that what they have now is what they refer to as "general orders". "General orders" are not very clear about what civil servants should do or not do, in terms of ethics. So, they've drafted a code of ethics and conduct, and also they've also drafted a training policy—a national training policy for the civil service, which is another reform.*

If you look at the government's Budgeting and Accountability Act, which is basically—to sort of which is there to tighten up the loose ends in terms of the way finances are being managed by the government. That's another reform process that is going on. In fact, within the Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Project, there is the Public Financial Management Reform Process, and there they are working with the Ministry of Finance to sort of reform the system.

Also, the government is trying to revive the old Civil Service Training College, and in that, sort of foster training within the civil service. I was speaking to an officer cadet last week, and he said that he only had three days of training, as some sort of induction for him to get into the service. As far as I'm concerned, three days of training is not enough. In the past it was three months of training. From three months it came down to one month, now it's just three days.

McCANTS: I'm sorry, what is this for?

KARGBO: *This is for people that are entering the service. So, you come into the service, you have three days of induction. In the past, it was three months; you have to go*

three months of training. Now it is just three days, you know - a training program for you to enter the civil service.

McCANTS: Who conducts the induction for new civil servants?

KARGBO: *I think it is still the Establishment Secretary's office.*

McCANTS: Why did it change from three months to three days?

KARGBO: *Quite often they would say it is lack of financial resources.*

McCANTS: And so, who is now kind of pushing for the efforts to expand that training?

KARGBO: *Basically, the Human Resource Management Office. We use the word they are "management" and we use human resources, which is different from—what they have now, for instance is they just recruit and they train. So, they are not looking at the development aspect—staff development. Also, with the training policy—training policy specifically says, for instance, that for you to move from a cadet officer to assistant secretary, you must have gone through a sort of set—you have to go through a series of training programs for you to move from one role to another.*

At the moment, you go in as cadet officer, you move on to another level without the relevant training. So, the training policy is supposed to clearly state what is expected of civil servants, and sort of the kind of training that they have to go through for them to move on, to enable them to do their jobs in their different positions.

McCANTS: Who is it that developed this national training policy?

KARGBO: *I think, again, before this time we had what was referred to as the Governance Reform Unit, now we have the Public Sector Reform Unit. So, the Governance Reform Unit I think drafted the training policy. Obviously in consultation with the different ministries, departments, and agencies.*

McCANTS: Has it been implemented yet?

KARGBO: *No. Because it's—I was talking to the Secretary for Training and Recruitment and he was saying to me that it's all part of the overall reform package and that you cannot implement this in isolation.*

McCANTS: Going back a little bit to IPAM specifically, who is involved here in carrying out training both for the civil servants who come here short-term, as well as for the longer degree programs for public administration?

KARGBO: *Basically, even though we are sort of a public institution, we develop courses, and as I said, it's quite demand driven. We develop courses—some of these courses might be specific to different institutions and organizations, then it's up to the organizations to then send people there to train. Sometimes we would have tailor-made programs for the civil service, and those are quite often funded by either the government or by donors.*

Within the different ministries, departments, and agencies they have what they call "training coordinators." Those training coordinators are supposed to look at our annual—our sort of yearly brochures, and then identify those training programs that would suit their people in their departments.

McCANTS: How do you go about developing your curriculum for these types of courses?

KARGBO: *We basically would—although we don't sort of carry out a very formal needs assessment, but we would try and look at some of the needs—the gaps, both in the private sector and the public sector. We do talk to human resource managers, particularly in the case of the private sector. We consult with other stakeholders and they express their needs to us, and say, "We need our people to be trained in these areas." and then we then act on those. But there are some tailor-made courses, they are tailor-made, they are specifically demanded by certain organizations. They would say, "We want you to train our people in general management." So, we then put together a course on general management.*

McCANTS: How does the training take place? Is it in a classroom, more of a lecture-style? Or is it kind of more hands-on?

KARGBO: *We have different learning methods. We have lectures, we have group discussions, we have case-study method, and we have syndicate groups. In some cases, we have practical—for example, last week, we are doing something on delivering—sort of using computer technologies to deliver training programs. So then, had a one session—theoretical session, then second session they went into the computer lab and, for instance, they learned how to do a PowerPoint presentation.*

McCANTS: Are there other institutions or groups, organizations that also do training? You mentioned that you were training trainers last week? Who are the other trainers that you are training?

KARGBO: *We are training these different ministries, departments, and agencies. These are people that are in charge of training in their various organizations. We are training them to go and train other people within their organizations. There are other institutions within the country that also offer training programs. We have private institutions. We also have other universities. For instance, there is Njala University that does offer some master's degree programs. There is also private provision as well, and any of the consultants that also deliver training.*

McCANTS: How effective do you think this system of training the trainers, the training coordinators, is in terms of translating that training effectively into their respective ministries?

KARGBO: *First of all, we have the training because we felt that as a training coordinator, you should be aware, for example, of the psychology of the adult learner. As a training coordinator, you should be able to assess, you need to be able to identify and assess the needs—the training needs of your organization. That training of trainers was not simply for them to just go and train. But before they can put together a training program, they have to first of all identify and assess the needs of training in their various organizations. Also, they are to be able to sort of put together a training program—like design a training program, and then evaluate that training program, administer training. You obviously have to look at putting together a proposal for training—sort of the financial aspect of training, and then implementing the training program, and then evaluating it.*

So, those coordinators may not be training people, but they will be required, for example, to put together a training proposal and submit it. They will also

required, for example, if they send people for training, they should be able to evaluate whether if that action has made any impact on those people.

McCANTS: What skills did you find particularly lacking from these trainers? What skills were they particularly strong in and what skills did they need some work?

KARGBO: *Some of them are presentation skills—problems, you know. Some of them are even—IT skills were not up to the level required.*

McCANTS: These are the primary people in charge of training at the ministry level?

KARGBO: *Yes, they are responsible for training. They are the training coordinators within their ministries.*

McCANTS: Is this the first time you've conducted training for them?

KARGBO: *This training program was conducted under the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) program, sort of funded by this organization, and it is sort of within the overall public sector management-training program of ACBF. This is the first time we carried out this sort of training of trainers. We had about 14 from the MDA's and then we also put in some of our guys at IPAM. We had about five people from IPAM, so in total we had 19 participants.*

McCANTS: Are there other types of technologies that particularly make your programs here successful—computers, other types of technology that you use?

KARGBO: *Yes—all our classrooms are fitted with projectors, we use projectors. All our lectures are in PowerPoint. It's basically the IT equipment—the computers, the projectors. And also the fact that all of our classes are air-conditioned, so it helps a lot.*

McCANTS: What language are your programs conducted in?

KARGBO: *In English.*

McCANTS: Do you ever find that kind of language differences or other kinds of religious or cultural divisions complicate civil service management or civil service delivery?

KARGBO: *There is always—the thing is that when we design a program, we have a target group. We try and look at the media of that target group, so that the course is not too basic and not too advanced, so we look at the media. For example, we say, "At minimum it's a first degree, if you are coming in." We look at also the position of responsibility within the organization. We look at the age. We look at the experience background, how much experience they have. So basically we are trying to have a group that is not homogenous, but it's not too heterogeneous. We sort of look at the medium, wherein people come in, they can easily fit in. People basically will come in with different backgrounds in terms of the religion and so on and so forth. But, we haven't actually faced in terms of—we haven't actually faced, as I said, most of the courses we offer here are—most of the people that come here, either they have certification from elsewhere, and we pitch our courses according to the target group.*

McCANTS: I'd like to move on to talking a little bit about relationships with donors, knowing that donors often drive training initiatives. Can you speak to the relationships between international organizations or donors and how that may have affected

your training initiatives? Has it been a positive type of interaction or have there been problems with the donor involvement with training?

KARGBO: *It's always sort of the bureaucracy that is involved in trying to get a training approved. We discover that—[INTERRUPTION]*

McCANTS: We are continuing the interview with Dr. Michael Kargbo at the Institute for Public Administration and Management. We were just discussing problems that may arise with relationships with donors.

KARGBO: *As I was saying, it's always a problem of getting a training program approved, bureaucracy that is involved. We found that it is a lot easier working with the private sector than working with donor-driven programs. I have to say also—because also the civil service is quite bureaucratic as well. Interestingly, we are supposed to be delivering more training for the public sector here, but it seems as if it's the private sector that is sort of responding to our programs.*

McCANTS: Do you have any recommendations of things that could be done to improve that relationship or make it easier for you to interact with donors in that way?

KARGBO: *I think the major issue is—in terms of delivering, sort of designing the programs, the key issue is—who establishes the needs for a particular public sector organization? Who is involved in the design of that program? Because quite often you find out that if people are involved in establishing the needs, in assessing the needs—there are needs, first of all, and then they are then involved with the design, then you will see that the training program will then sort of meet their expectations. But quite often there is some sort of mismatch between the needs and the programs—and the training programs that are delivered.*

McCANTS: How does that mismatch happen?

KARGBO: *Because quite often it's the donors that then say, "You need this training." Then they go back to the MDA's and they discover that they haven't got the resources or the capacity to even sort of put those skills into practice. So, let's say you train a group of civil servants in IT skills and then they go back to their department and they don't have access to computers, or their computers are broken, or they don't have access to the internet.*

McCANTS: What do you think should be done to kind of correct that mismatch then?

KARGBO: *I think the needs should be identified by the people themselves. We had a training—we are saying to those civil servants that for them to draw up any training program, they need to first of all do a needs assessment. They have to be able to identify the needs and the gaps—the skills gaps, and then design training programs that are geared towards meeting those needs. You need to clearly specify your training objectives.*

If I say that at the end of this training you should be able to use PowerPoint, then that should be the case, and I have to be sure that you would have the opportunity of using PowerPoint in your day to day work. There's no point in me spending a lot of my training on how to use PowerPoint, and then you go back to your organization and you don't have the opportunity to use PowerPoint. So the objectives should be clear and any training should be geared towards meeting those objectives. There's no point sort of writing very, very ambitious objectives. The objectives should be very, very realistic, pragmatic.

McCANTS: Are there any area's needs in the current civil service or public sector that you feel like are not being addressed or not being met?

KARGBO: *First of all, it's surprising that some top civil servants do not even have access to—do not even have an e-mail account. So, basic IT skills—it's very, very crucial that people should be able to use computers. You have to be proactive and not reactive—you only train people when there's a need now to train them. You have to sort of take a long-term view and foresee that these people need training on using a new system. As I was saying, if you bring in reform process, for instance, you bring in this performance appraisal, and people don't know what performance appraisal is. How are people going to be able to carry out performance appraisal? So, people need to be trained in performance appraisal. People need to be trained in testing. People need to be trained in communication skills.*

McCANTS: Thanks very much for taking the time. I'm finished with my formal questions. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you feel you need to add?

KARGBO: *Well, I – I'm fine.*

McCANTS: Great, well thank you so much.

KARGBO: *Ok, all right.*