AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (AS-SBC)

Crossroads and New Paths: Navigating Professional Transitions

Webinar Synthesis & Decision-Making Framework for Social and Behavior Change Practitioners

KEYNOTE SPEAKER	SPECIAL GUEST	HOST ORGANIZATION	TARGET AUDIENCE
Mr. Stephen K. Lwanga	Prof. Francis Omaswa	AS-SBC Secretariat	SBC & Health Specialists

1. CONTEXT & PURPOSE OF THE DIALOGUE

The social and behavior change (SBC) and international development sectors across Eastern and Sub-Saharan Africa have recently faced significant turbulence. Abrupt contractions in foreign donor allocations, sudden project close-outs, and organizational downsizing have placed numerous development professionals at acute career crossroads.

This session, hosted by the African Society for Social and Behaviour Change, brought together distinguished elder statesman of public health Mr. Stephen K. Lwanga and renowned global health leader Prof. Francis Omaswa. The dialogue provided an anchor of lived wisdom, ethical clarity, and systematic decision-making tools to help practitioners transition from paralysis and distress toward self-determination and proactive career evolution.

2. THE FOUR PILLARS OF DECISION-MAKING (MR. STEPHEN K. LWANGA)

Drawing from his book *Fork in the Road: Creating a Future of Value Starting from Where You Are*, Mr. Lwanga articulated four core principles governing critical turning points:

PILLAR I

Overcome Procrastination

Derived from the Latin for *"forward to tomorrow,"* procrastination delays vital choices. Indecision freezes personal and professional growth. Making a timely decision—even under ambiguity—releases emotional paralysis and restores forward momentum.

PILLAR II

No Choice Is Worthless

Every road yields valuable learning. Favorable decisions deliver progress, while unfavorable outcomes build wisdom by showing what not to repeat. Opportunities only unveil themselves once motion begins, akin to navigating winding mountain roads.

PILLAR III

Expect Ups and Downs

No professional trajectory is immune to hardship. Experiencing a trough is an operational reality rather than personal failure. Acknowledging that every path possesses inherent challenges builds emotional stamina and long-term resilience.

PILLAR IV

Go Boldly Without Looking Back

Once a choice is determined, commit with complete resolve. Ruminating over past comforts or hypothetical *"what-ifs"* drains creative energy. Personal agency dictates your future; progress is forged by moving courageously ahead.

Key Principle: *"Procrastination is often disguised fear and lack of self-confidence. Assemble the facts you have, trust your judgment, and step out boldly. The scenery ahead only opens up once you start walking."*

3. LIVED EXPERIENCES: CRITICAL JUNCTURES & STRATEGIC LESSONS

Historical Crossroads	Dilemma Faced	Action Taken	Practical SBC Takeaway
The Ancestral Rescue (Family History)	Sudden maternal death required choosing between immediate burial attendance or saving a newborn infant.	Grandfather entrusted the burial to a loyal friend and carried the baby miles to safety and sustenance.	In high-stakes emergencies, prioritize life, preservation, and high-impact long-term survival over ritual routine.
1977 Departure from Uganda (S. K. Lwanga)	Severe state insecurity threatened personal safety versus remaining in an established home, career, and community.	Moved family through Entebbe Airport security without hesitation, never looking back at left-behind assets.	When fundamental conditions become untenable, cut losses decisively; safety and purpose outweigh static assets.
Uganda AIDS Commission (S. K. Lwanga)	Comfortable, secure tenure at the World Health Organization (WHO) versus leading a fledgling national response.	Accepted temporary leave from WHO to establish the foundation of Uganda's world-recognized AIDS Commission.	Embrace high-uncertainty assignments; novel challenges unlock latent leadership and strategic competencies.
Standing on Principle (S. K. Lwanga)	Lucrative post-retirement remuneration versus unaddressed mistreatment of local personnel by executive leaders.	Resigned immediately on ethical grounds, directing his energies into agriculture and community Rotary service.	Never compromise core ethics or human dignity for financial perks or executive comfort.
Rural Medical Leadership (Prof. F. Omaswa)	High-earning cardiovascular surgical positions in the UK and Kenya versus rebuilding healthcare in post-war Uganda.	Returned with his family to establish high-standard surgical capacity at Ngora Hospital in rural Eastern Uganda.	Anchoring professional work in tangible community need creates lasting institutional value that outlives donor shifts.

4. STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES FOR PRACTITIONERS (PROF. FRANCIS OMASWA)

1. Build Irreplaceable, Community-Centered Competencies:
International donor programs and funding cycles naturally fluctuate, but genuine technical and behavioral expertise remains in persistent demand. Practitioners who master core competencies—such as evidence-based program design, field research, and community trust building—will always find opportunities seeking them out.

2. Involve Family and Support Systems in Major Transitions:
Substantial career shifts invariably affect households. Transparent discussions with family provide grounding and moral backing during periods of relocation, entrepreneurial risk, or organizational realignment.

3. Stop Mourning Over Spilled Milk:
Macro-political decisions, sudden funding cancellations, and donor shifts are beyond individual control. Expending emotional capital lamenting lost contracts paralyzes creative initiative. Direct all energy toward the variables within your direct control.

5. WEBINAR Q&A: GUIDANCE FOR COMMON CAREER DILEMMAS

Q: How does a professional overcome the paralyzing fear of launching out independently?
Response: Indecision typically masks a deficit in self-confidence rather than a lack of information. Gather current market data, identify your unique service proposition, and act briskly. Waiting indefinitely does not reduce risk; it simply drains personal momentum.

Q: How should practitioners evaluate calculated risks during career pivots?
Response: Weigh the probabilities rationally, acknowledge that zero risk does not exist, and choose the path with the strongest long-term value alignment. Once decided, pursue it wholeheartedly rather than keeping one foot in hesitation.

SBC PRACTITIONER TRANSITION CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Conduct a Skill Audit:** Reframe SBC expertise (advocacy, research, human-centered design) beyond single-donor models.
- ☐ **Diversify Application:** Apply SBC methodologies to emerging sectors (climate resilience, agritech, local public health).
- ☐ **Eliminate Procrastination:** Identify one critical delayed career decision and commit to taking action this week.
- ☐ **Leverage Peer Networks:** Actively engage with the AS-SBC community for collaborative bids and cross-learning.