

CHAO: Hello and welcome to the Global Innovation Outlook Podcast Series where IBM demonstrates the innovative value of collaboration.

My name is Verna Grayce Chao, and today we'll be talking about IBM's Makocha Minds Mentorship Program with one of the program's mentor and protege pairs. [Rick Boivie], an IBM Distinguished Engineer, and [Dennis Muchiri] who is in his fourth year of studies at the University of Nairobi, School of Computing and Informatics. Welcome to you both and thank you for joining for us today.

BOIVIE: Thank you, Verna Grayce.

MUCHIRI: Thank you.

CHOW: Before I jump into some questions for you both, I'd like to give our listeners a little background on the Makocha Minds Mentoring Program.

First of all, we chose the word Makocha because it means teacher or coach in the African language Swahili. The program [INAUDIBLE] out of IBM's Global Innovation Outlook which recently explored the future of innovation and economic growth in Africa.

IBM launched Makocha Minds Mentor Program to give its technical leaders an unprecedented opportunity to share their knowledge and personal career expertise with African

students.

Through these mentoring relationships, students gain an inside perspective on their chosen areas of study and future career options. They can talk to their mentors about how large global business organizations work and about how to better prepare for the working world.

So with that as a backdrop, why don't I ask you both to tell a little bit about yourself, where you grew up, where you're living now and where you are in your perspective careers. And give us a little perspective on what the term mentoring means to you. Rick, do you want to kick us off?

BOIVIE: Sure. My name is [Rick Boivie] and I grew up on Long Island in New York, not too far from where I work now in Hawthorne, New York. I'm a Distinguished Engineer in IBM Research. I have responsibility for doing work in technical areas related to networking and security.

To me, mentoring is all about helping another person accomplish his or her goals -- helping a person fulfill his or her potential. It involves listening, serving as a sounding board, understanding where another person is coming from and sharing feedback and insights based on one's own experience.

CHOW: Great, thank you. And Dennis, can you share a little bit about yourself?

MUCHIRI: My name is [Dennis Muchiri], I am from a family of four. I got my mother and my two brothers. I grew up in a country town of [Kutas] about 100 or so kilometers from the city of Nairobi, [the Kenyan capital].

I did my schooling in [Mamboso] High School, I went to the University of Nairobi in the School of Computing and Informatics. I've been there for the last four years.

Makocha Mentorship Program, it was a great opportunity when [I first heard about it]. Mentorship for me is a relationship that is formed between the mentor and the prodigy. It's a relationship that demands to have a mutual relationship whereby each learn from each other. At the end of the day, we are looking at person with higher experience and training to share some of the experiences.

CHOW: Thank you. So, Rick, why don't I jump with you first. Can you share with us as a follow on kind of your discussion of mentoring, what impact mentoring has had on your own career development?

BOIVIE: I would say that mentoring has had a very large impact on my career. I haven't always had an official

mentor as part of a formal mentoring program, but I have certainly benefitted from the experience, expertise and insights of many other people throughout my entire career.

I don't believe that any of us is a self-made man or a self-made woman, and I believe that each of us can go further when we build upon the knowledge of those that have come before us.

As Isaac Newton said, if I have seen a little further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants. I think that's really true [for all of us].

CHOW: I think that's a great sentiment. Dennis, could you share with us how mentoring as a concept is done in Kenya today?

MUCHIRI: Kenya or rather Africa in large don't have formal systems for mentorship. Part of Kenya we don't have that kind of thing, it's never there. And we don't actually have the structure. It is a question of individual efforts, we don't have formal structure like what IBM have. It's not a concept so to speak.

CHOW: Just as a quick follow up, this program sounds like it's unique and a new experience for you. Are you finding that it's something that would benefit broadly

across Kenya and Africa?

MUCHIRI: Oh, sure. I'll tell you the first day I told my brother, "I'm in the mentorship program" and he was like, "okay, wow, what an opportunity." Every other person I tell about the experience that I am having they are all excited about it and they ask me how I got into it and everyone would love to do that.

CHOW: Jumping back to you Rick, can you share with us what drew you to volunteer as a mentor for IBM's Makocha Minds Program?

BOIVIE: When I first heard about the Makocha Minds Program, it struck me as a great opportunity to really help make a difference. Africa is a continent with a great deal of potential but much of that potential is still untapped in my view.

I thought that by leveraging the expertise of hundreds of technical leaders across IBM we could help develop that potential and over time perhaps improve the lives of millions of people across Africa.

And I also thought that at this point in my career, I must have learned a couple of things that could be useful to the next generation. And since I also know a lot of people in

IBM now, it occurred to me that I might also be able to tap into that broad range of expertise that exists within this company when my own expertise is not enough.

CHOW: Thank you. And as a follow up on that, how are you approaching your mentor role in Makocha Minds differently than, say, other mentoring roles that you've had in the past?

BOIVIE: Well, it is a little different than some previous mentoring roles that I've had. Of course, you know, Nairobi is not very close to New York City so we meet on the phone and Dennis and I have never actually met in person yet.

Second, since, you know, Dennis and I hadn't really known each other at all when we first started on this, we spent a little bit of time getting to know each other. We swapped bios, talked about our families and our interests both in and outside of work. And we talked about our respective careers to this point. Interestingly, we also learned that we both had just finished reading the same book that was sort of interesting.

I also wanted to understand Dennis' environment in Kenya. Obviously, I've never been there, I don't know much about what life is like. And Dennis has been kind enough to take

some time and, you know, describing, you know, that environment to me.

And then since a mentor, of course, is supposed to be able to help the mentee achieve his goals, I asked Dennis to tell me about his goals and aspirations. And Dennis has recently sent me his five-year plan. So I guess our next step is to try to figure out how I might be able to help with that plan.

CHOW: Great. Well, it does sound like you've been able to adapt well to the uniqueness of the program but also leverage some of your own experience of mentoring. So Dennis, jumping back to you, how do you see Makocha Minds Mentorship complementing your academic experience?

MUCHIRI: Makocha Minds Mentoring Program is more than I could have asked for. [Even from the telephone conversations and e-mails I've gotten to learn a lot from Boivie. He is an icon in computing.

I feel like a sense of belonging, we talk about our personal lives, we talk about our families, we talk about, you know, we don't just keep it formal. It's a great opportunity for me. I mean, I'll be looking to doing my MBA, with Boivie in the States he will be able to give me the best guidance. I'm a firm believer in what can you do with technology, can

you make a changes using technology in the world.

CHOW: Thank you. And as a follow up on that, could you see yourself as a mentor in the future?

MUCHIRI: Oh, sure. One of the things that gave me a lot of, you know, joy in life is to make a change in another person. You know, be it your friend or a person that you never know, a person you're meeting for the first time. And I believe mentorship is a way, you know, no matter the difference, no matter the time, you can still make an impact, a change, you know, on someone's life and that's very good - I can't wait.

CHOW: Well, that's all the questions I have today and I want to thank you both again for joining us and sharing your experiences with our listeners. I also want to thank you both for being part of the Makocha Minds Program, and wish you both the best of luck.

BOIVIE: Thank you.

MUCHIRI: Pleasure, the pleasure is all mine. Greetings from Africa!

CHOW: And for more information about the Global Innovation Outlook, you can visit [www.ibm.com/gio](http://www.ibm.com/gio). Thank you.

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