The MasterCard Foundation

Career Choices, Return Paths and Social Contributions

THE AFRICAN ALUMNI PROJECT

Abridged Report, May 2016

Report prepared for The MasterCard Foundation

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We are grateful to The MasterCard Foundation for believing in the potential of this study to shed new light on the role of scholarships in promoting social change in Africa and globally, and in providing the funding to carry out the work. Finally, and most importantly, this study is the product of the African alumni who gave generously of their time to share their experiences and perspectives through comprehensive surveys and interviews. We express our sincere appreciation to all of the alumni who participated in the study.

SETTING THE STAGE

Globally, the demand for higher education is at an all-time high, and rates of growth in this sector are very strong.[1] A central feature of this demand is its international character: contemporary students are more likely than ever to cross borders seeking the credentials, technical skills, subject area expertise, and training in scientific and critical thinking available at the tertiary level. As a result, universities around the world have increasingly prioritized recruiting and supporting these international students.

In spite of the well-documented individual and national benefits of tertiary education, opportunities for access remain grossly uneven around the world. Nowhere is this inequity of access more clear than in Sub-Saharan Africa, which trails all other regions in absolute and relative tertiary enrollment rates.[2] Faced with underfunded and often underperforming universities on the continent, many top African students pursue their higher education abroad, and many do not return. Others have returned to play leadership roles in academia, government, business, international agencies and civil society. Nevertheless, the post-graduation evidence is largely anecdotal.

The MasterCard Foundation has committed substantial investments to improve access to quality secondary and tertiary education in Africa, as well as "school to employment" transition support. As part of this investment, the Scholars Program has partnered with international universities, within and outside Africa, to provide comprehensive undergraduate and master's-level scholarships to talented, economically disadvantaged African youth who demonstrate leadership potential and a commitment to "giving back" to their communities.

Five of these universities from the United States (University of California, Berkeley, Michigan State University), Canada (McGill University, University of Toronto) and Costa Rica (EARTH University), plus Simon Fraser University in Canada[3], have partnered to conduct this pioneering study on the career and life trajectories of past African alumni of their respective universities, with the intention to gain knowledge and insights that may improve outcomes for current and future African scholars. Survey and interview methods were used to learn why these African alumni pursued higher education abroad, how they reflect on their international university experience, what paths they've pursued after graduation, and how these alumni have contributed to social transformation on the African continent.

This study contributes new empirical knowledge to the field of higher education and social change and the sub-field of international student mobility. Through evidence on the return paths of Sub-Saharan African alumni of international universities, it also contributes to the ongoing "brain drain" debate.

1 UNESCO. 2014. "Higher Education." Home>Education>Higher Education. Retrieved February 4, 2014 (http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/tertiary-education.aspx).

2 Kritz, Mary M. 2012. "Globalization of Higher Education and International Student Mobility." Retrieved February 4, 2014 (http://www.un.orgesa/population/meetings/EGM_MigrationTrends/KritzPresentationFinal.pdf). [with the possible exception of Central Asia]

3 SFU is not a MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program partner but participated fully in the study.

The study has gathered important insights on the value of an international education from the retrospective perspectives of African alumni living on the continent and in the diaspora, data that will inform the global outreach of partner universities.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The research team designed an informative and attractive survey invitation, with individual login IDs, to send to all Sub-Saharan African alumni for whom preliminary contact information had been obtained. Table 1 provides summary characteristics of the survey sample of 294 alumni by research partner.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY CHARACTERISTICS BY RESEARCH PARTNER

Partner	Gender M, F (%)	Childhood community (% rural[4])	Int'l univ. degree (%)	Grad. year (median)	Current age (mean)	Current job in Country of Origin (%)	Top Country of Origin [5]
UC Berkeley	M: 78 F: 22	26	UG: 9 MA: 47 PhD: 44	2000	51	50	South Africa
MSU	M: 64 F: 36	36	UG: 6 MA: 38 PhD: 56	2002	52	47	Kenya
EARTH	M: 75 F: 25	63	UG: 100 MA: 0 PhD: 0	2008	34	63	Uganda
SFU	M: 40 F: 60	10	UG: 82 MA: 18 PhD: 0	2008	29	46	Kenya
McGill	M: 68 F: 32	17	UG: 38 MA: 24 PhD: 38	2005	39	60	Kenya
U of T	M: 50 F: 50	24	UG: 50 MA: 35 PhD: 15	2003	45	48	South Africa
ALL PARTNERS	M: 68 F: 32	28	UG: 22 MA: 37 PhD: 41	2003	47	50[6]	

4 Approximate indication or "proxy" for lower socioeconomic status. Note the wide variation in lower socio-economic status (SES) among partner universities, from 63% for EARTH to just 10% for SFU. SES for MasterCard Foundation Scholars is more homogeneous among partners as they face the same financial selection criteria (e.g. lower two income quintiles).

5 Survey sample includes alumni from 29 Sub-Saharan African nations.

6 Another est. 5.5% work in Africa outside of COO = 55.5% total primary workplace in Africa, 44.5% in the diaspora. Further data on working and residing within Africa and "global citizens" are presented later in the report.

In addition to the global survey, in-person interviews were conducted on field trips to East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania), West Africa (Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo) and southern Africa (South Africa). Interviews were also conducted with alumni residing in various diaspora communities of the United States and Canada, including the San Francisco Bay Area, Washington, DC, New York City, East Lansing, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

KEY FINDINGS

The theory of change of The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program is that Scholars who study abroad, and who have been selected in part because of their commitment to giving back to their home communities, will return to Africa and promote positive social change through their organizations and businesses, engendering transformative changes for society at large, given sufficient time and support.

The findings from this study show evidence to support this theory. Participating alumni who returned to Africa are giving back to their communities across a wide variety of fields and sectors. A majority of alumni credit their international education and continuing international collaborations and networks with providing them with the confidence, skills and resources to endure challenging periods at home, and eventually succeed and thrive. Some alumni are leading truly transformative changes in government policy, corporate governance, university structures, and health and education reforms, among other areas, changes that could not have been accomplished from the outside.

At the same time, the research highlights the complex set of factors influencing post-graduation "return" decisions, resulting in paths with significant career and geographic mobility, shared commitments to contribute to African development in diverse capacities, and the possibility of delayed return into transformative roles decades after graduation. Analysis also indicates various ways to support post-graduation transitions that will be meaningful on both individual and social levels.

CAREER AND LIFE TRAJECTORY

- Career goals are strongly influenced by childhood experiences, family values and primary, secondary and tertiary education in Africa. In general, international education experiences confirmed, but did not change, pre-established career goals and choices.
- There is striking socioeconomic and career mobility for alumni of international universities, compared to the majority in countries of origin. Ninety-six percent of the surveyed alumni consider themselves better or much better off than the majority in their countries of origin, as compared to 66% during their childhood.
- Some alumni have pursued non-linear career paths traversing continents, sectors and fields; others have pursued linear, upward-moving paths where careers are built within a single institution — in a majority of cases, around their universities.
- Alumni who maintained strong connections with their mentors, across all sectors, were able to weather career and economic hardships more successfully. For those

who returned to Africa, international collaborations often proved a "lifeline" during periods of greatest political instability and economic hardship.

RETURN PATHS

- Interviews provided insights into the "return or stay" dilemmas African alumni face upon graduation and the evolving considerations influencing their decisions over time. The findings suggest caution in framing the debate about "return" in moral terms, presenting a false dichotomy. Instead, shared values characterize all groups of alumni, while differing opportunities and personal circumstances contribute to their diverse pathways upon completion of their studies, and over a lifetime.
- Alumni identified five key factors influencing their return decisions (in descending order): desire to implement knowledge gained; job prospects; ability to make a contribution to country of origin; desire to become a recognized professional; place to raise a family.
- Alumni who pursued graduate degrees were more likely to return to their countries of origin (50%) as compared with undergraduates (30%), and certain fields of study, such as health and agricultural and social sciences, had very high return rates as compared with business, law and engineering.
- There are many examples of alumni who "delayed return" to pursue strategies for securing resources and establishing relationships and networks abroad in order to prepare for a successful return. Several alumni delayed their return for more than three decades, pursuing careers and raising children in the diaspora, and eventually returning to their home countries as social entrepreneurs, businesspeople and academic and thought leaders.
- Presence and type of scholarship were found to be significantly associated with return to country of origin. Alumni who received scholarships from private foundations, companies and individual sponsors were most likely to return, while two thirds of self-funded alumni remained in the diaspora.

LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

- For most African alumni, family members have been influential figures and strong role models of social and civic engagement, irrespective of socioeconomic status.
- A substantial number of African alumni who participated in this study are generating social change of a transformative nature, affecting mindsets of institutions and governments, creating new organizations, developing innovative technologies and improving the lives of large numbers of people. These transformative leaders are "making change happen" across Sub-Saharan Africa (see Appendix B).
- Eighty-six percent of the alumni have held leadership positions in their respective careers. Forty percent self-identify as "social entrepreneurs."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Sixty percent of alumni are currently employed in local, national or international positions directly related to African social and economic development (74% of those residing in country of origin, 26% of those residing in the diaspora).
- The majority of, if not all, African alumni in the diaspora remain deeply connected with their countries of origin, contributing through remittances, investments, charitable contributions and, increasingly, their knowledge and skills through academic and other exchanges.

VALUE OF AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

- The data show a combination of pull and push factors that explain the opportunity and motivation to pursue higher education abroad. Prestige and employment prospects in combination with a scholarship opportunity and the encouragement of mentors or family members are decisive.
- Most alumni believe they have fared "better" or "much better" than their peers who did not study abroad in three aspects: finding a first job, career advancement and making a positive difference in country of origin.
- Critical thinking pedagogy and practical methods at US and Canadian universities, as well as EARTH University, were important for building confidence as scholars and innovators, skills that were subsequently leveraged for career advancement and effecting social change.
- All alumni cited exposure to students of different nationalities, religions, ethnicities and sexual orientations as pivotal for expanding their worldview and breaking down previously held stereotypes.
- Graduate students experienced different challenges than undergraduates, and generally had greater maturity to overcome them — whether they were social issues, such as racism and homesickness, or the focused attention needed to deal with academic challenges.

LEARNING FRAMEWORK

The central goal of the study is to retrospectively examine the factors influencing career and life decisions of African alumni of partner universities, and, more specifically, to understand how these path decisions have influenced their contributions to social and economic development on the African continent. We focused the study on four key questions:

Career Trajectory:
What are the post-graduation experiences of African alumni from international universities?

Return Paths:
What are the factors that have influenced African alumni's post-graduation decisions to return, or not, to their region/country of origin?

Social Engagement:
Have African alumni prioritized social and civic engagement with their region/country of origin? If so, what types of engagement with what social change outcomes? What are the factors that have influenced alumni decisions to prioritize social and civic engagement?

Value of an International Education:
How has the international university experience influenced the career choices and social engagement contributions of African alumni?

Additionally, we asked African alumni to provide insights and advice to current and future African students to: 1) maximize the value of their academic and social experience; 2) prepare for a successful post-graduation transition to further studies or the workforce, and, as in the case of MasterCard Foundation Scholars aspiring to return to Africa; 3) prepare for career opportunities and challenges they will face on the continent.

We also developed a simple three-phase model to guide analysis of the four key research questions. Data were collected on all life phases from early childhood until the present. The interview questionnaire paid particular attention to critical junctures in the lives of participating alumni, and how those milestones contributed to career choices and levels and types of social engagement. Other questions were included on socioeconomic and political conditions during the three phases, both in Africa and globally, to understand how context influenced individual decisions over time.

METHODOLOGY[7]

The research team adopted a mixed methods approach to conducting a retrospective tracer study of Sub-Saharan African alumni of partner universities. The process included three phases over two years: 1) tracing Sub-Saharan African alumni and collecting current contact information; 2) administering a comprehensive web-based survey; and 3) conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with alumni in person and via telephone/video conference.

7 This is an abridged report focused on main findings. Readers who are interested in further detail about the methodology and more comprehensive discussion of findings can refer to the full report and accompanying appendices available from Dr. Robin Marsh: robinmarsh@berkeley.edu

The tracing phase was conducted on individual campuses, although tracing techniques were shared among partners. Many university records of the older African alumni were found to be absent or incomplete, particularly for the 1960s to mid-1990s, before records were digitized.

After an extensive data-gathering and tracing effort by multiple units in six universities, the study invited 1,575 African alumni to participate in a comprehensive web-based survey that addressed the research questions (Table 1). Of these, 294 submitted completed surveys.

To complement the survey with qualitative data and insights, team members conducted 100 in-depth interviews, the majority in-person and others via teleconference. Researchers from University of California, Berkeley, Michigan State University, EARTH University and Simon Fraser University made six trips to Africa to conduct interviews. In addition, all six partners interviewed alumni living in the diaspora of North America and Costa Rica. The multi-university team developed common codebooks to permit aggregation of data for the analysis.

SURVEY RESPONSE

We consider the 18.7% response rate on the web-based survey to be reasonable for international alumni, most of whom were out of touch with their *alma mater* institutions. The response sample is generally representative of the survey population for key variables (see Table 1), except for some differences in current residence, year of graduation, gender and degree earned as explained below.

Initial survey invitations resulted in a few responses from alumni residing in the diaspora asking if the study was only interested in the experiences of alumni who had returned to Africa. We addressed this misconception with a special invitation directed only to diaspora-residing alumni; however, the perception may have persisted for some and discouraged their participation. In the end, the survey split of approximately 55% residing in Africa and 45% residing outside of Africa is moderately biased in favour of responses from within the continent.

A greater proportion of alumni who studied in doctoral programs completed the survey, as compared to the total survey population, in part because of differences in response rates per university, and in part because of their special interest to contribute to the research effort. In addition, a greater proportion of recent graduates completed the survey, with a mean graduation year of 2003. This is related to more reliable contact information, aided by a stronger "digital presence" of the younger generation, and perhaps greater agility with web-based surveys. Nevertheless, survey responses cover a wide range of graduation dates spanning nearly half a century (1966–2014). Finally, there is a slight gender bias of survey respondents in favour of men over women, again due to differential partner response rates.

TABLE 2: ALUMNI DATA BY RESEARCH PARTNER							
Data	UC Berkeley	MSU	McGill	U of T	SFU	EARTH	Total
Sub-Saharan African alumni database[8]	**784**	**1,416**	**700**	**297**	**212**	**31**	**3,481**
(range grad year)	1960s to 2013	1950s to 2013	1985 to 2013	1995 to 2013	1987 to 2013	1999 to 2013	
Sent and received survey invitation[9]	408	610	323	190	29	15	1,575
Surveys completed	**118**	**84**	**40**	**33**	**11**	**8**	**294**
(response rates)	29%	14%	12%	17%	38%	53%	18.7%
Interviews conducted	**60**	**15**	**6**	**3**	**9**	**7**	**100**

MULTI-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

The African Alumni project has been a collaborative effort throughout the research process, led by the University of California, Berkeley.[10] Two partners are large public US universities — UC Berkeley and Michigan State University (MSU). Three are public universities in Canada — McGill University, the University of Toronto and Simon Fraser University (SFU). The sixth research partner is EARTH University, a private four-year college based in Costa Rica that specializes in agricultural sciences. Starting in 2000, in addition to educating students from throughout Latin America, EARTH began to take students from Sub-Saharan Africa. The research tasks involved significant contributions by all partners and institutional learning on multiple fronts, particularly in areas of alumni relations and data management (see Appendix A for details written by each research partner).

8 Data on degree, year of graduation, field of study, gender, and country of origin; data for MSU and UC Berkeley African alumni are most complete. The process of finding up-to-date contact information was only partially successful as shown in the reduced numbers that were sent and received survey invitations.

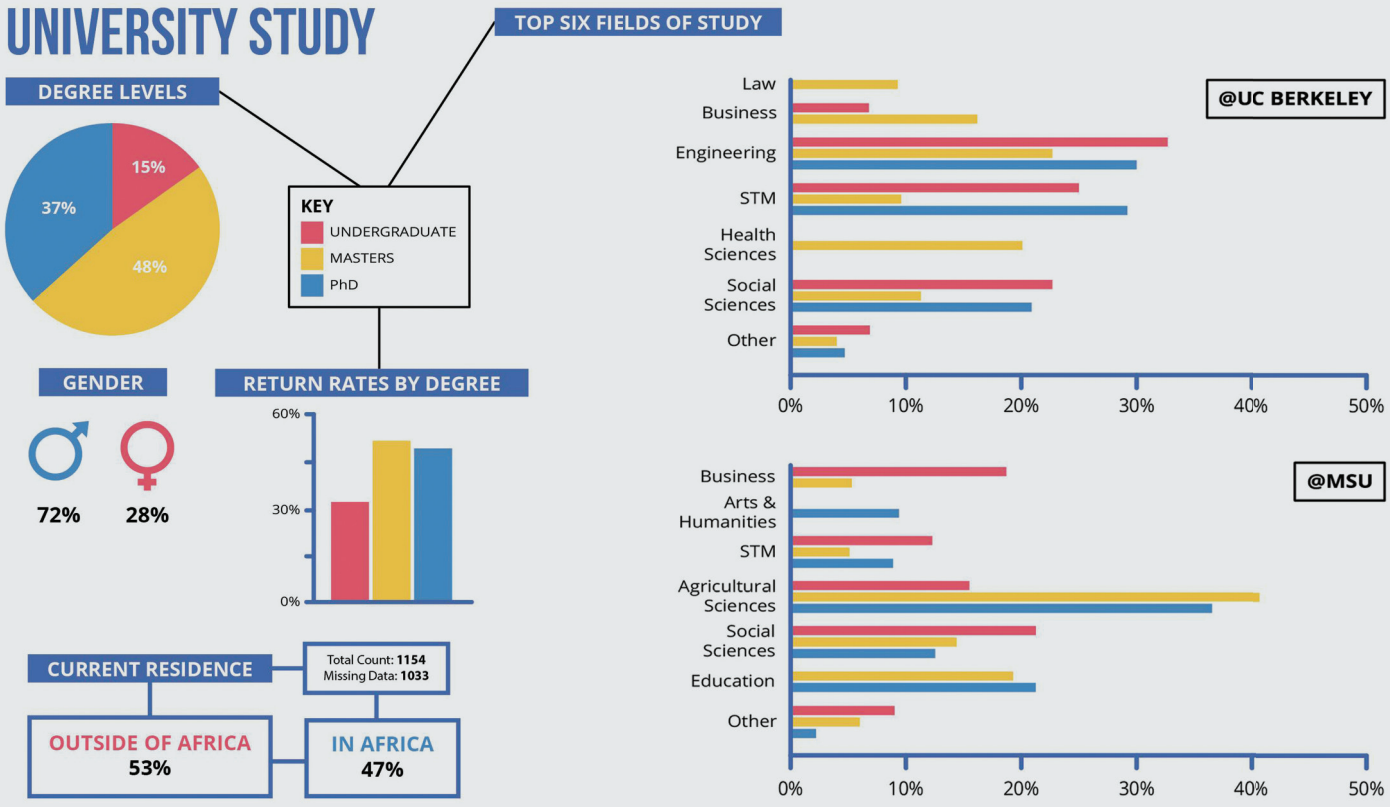
9 These numbers were confirmed through access to Mailchimp campaigns for UC Berkeley and EARTH, and reported by the other institutions.

10 See Acknowledgements for list of collaborators.

AFRICAN ALUMNI FROM UC BERKELEY AND MSU

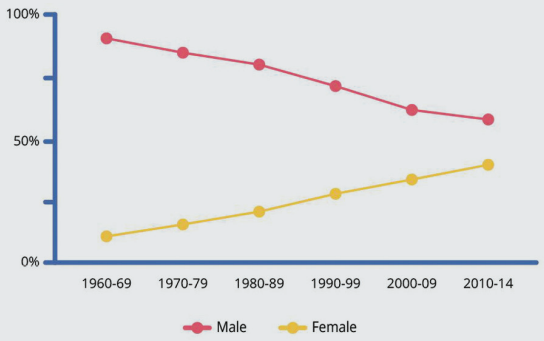
The UC Berkeley and MSU research teams engaged in intensive tracing of their African alumni, going back to the earliest students of the late 1950s and 1960s. Aided by the assistance of various campus units, this data set is considerably larger and more complete than that of the other partners and is therefore highlighted below. The two universities obtained basic data on gender, country/region of origin, degree, field of study, year of graduation and current residence for 2,200 alumni (784 for UC Berkeley; 1,416 for MSU), although not all variables have complete data.

As expected for these two large public research universities, most African alumni pursued graduate degrees (85%). Survey and interview analyses indicate that many of the undergraduates were self-funded whereas the majority of graduate students received scholarships, fellowships and/or teaching and research assistantships. In terms of field of study, there is a wide range for both universities, with the most numerous in the field of agricultural sciences for MSU and engineering for UC Berkeley. Of the 1,154 alumni for whom there are residence data, 53% live in the diaspora and 47% reside in Sub-Saharan Africa.

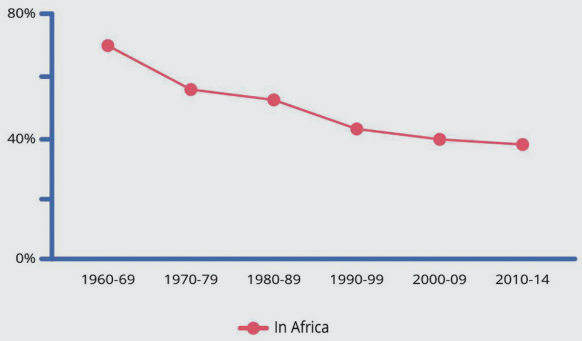


CHANGES OVER TIME

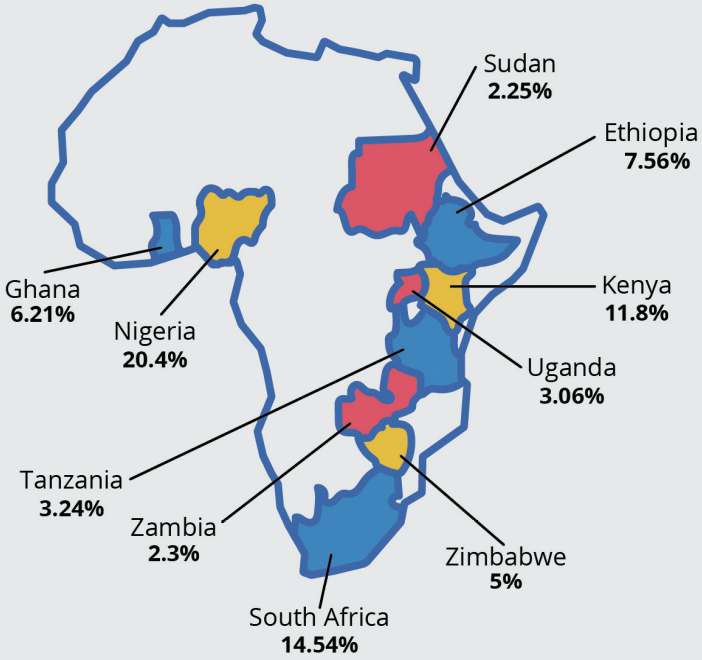
GENDER BY DECADE OF GRADUATION



RESIDENCE BY DECADE OF GRADUATION



We also looked at whether the large proportion of male alumni (average 72%) changed over time. The results show a strong tendency for the gender ratio to converge. Given the emphasis on recruitment of female students for the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, we expect this tendency to continue, with African women as numerous as or surpassing men on the UC Berkeley and MSU campuses. Finally, the data on region of origin show a relatively equal distribution for East, West (dominated by Nigeria) and Southern Africa (about 30% each); the top five countries are Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Ghana.



SURVEY AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings of the survey and qualitative analyses for the four research questions. The basic demographic data of the survey sample are shown in Table 1 (Executive Summary). Important findings are further illustrated through the life and career stories of selected African alumni.

[A] CAREER AND LIFE TRAJECTORY

An important area of inquiry for this study was to increase our understanding of the life trajectories of African alumni, from childhood and schooling in Africa, through to their international university experience and post-graduation career. Alumni return paths, social engagement and the overall value of an international education follow from this initial understanding.

Childhood Influence

Career goals are strongly influenced by childhood experiences, family values and primary, secondary and tertiary education in Africa. From a generational perspective, the availability and choice of schooling system during childhood — whether local or boarding, government or private — affected career goals and social mobility. Many interviewees cited various periods of economic and/or political instability in their home country as affecting identity formation and later educational and career choices. In general, international education experiences confirmed, but did not change, pre-established career goals and choices. This finding is partially explained because two thirds of the interviewees completed their undergraduate degree in their country of origin where fields of study and professional goals were formed. Even for alumni who pursued their undergraduate degrees in the US, Canada or Europe, the high school systems used in their home countries had already tracked them, for the most part, into fields of study, if not specific careers.

Dr. Thelma Awori is an example of how childhood experiences informed her values and career goals, and influenced her decision to pursue international education in the United States.

THELMA AWORI

[HOME COUNTRY: LIBERIA]

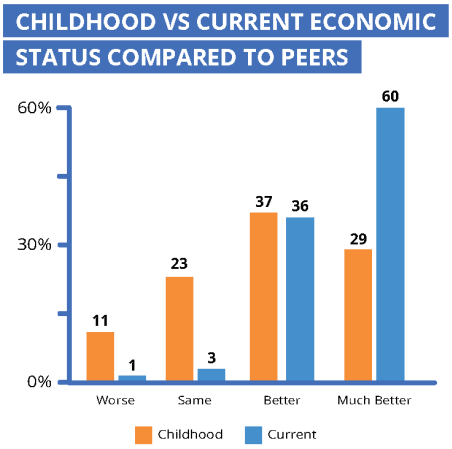
“Africa is not poor, not by the furthest imagination. Africa is one of the richest continents in this world. It’s just the people have a poverty mentality, and once they can get out of that poverty mentality, the sky is the limit.”

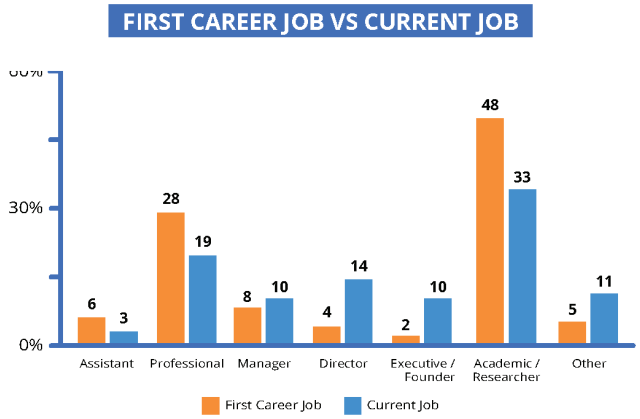
Thelma’s family played a strong role in shaping her values, educational experience and career goals. Her parents were both college-educated and spent time in the US for their post-secondary education. They were actively involved in the education of the village adults; her father headed the National Literacy Program in Monrovia, and her mother was a member of the Ministry of Education as well as a women’s rights activist.

Thelma left Liberia to attend Mount Holyoke College on the ASPAU (African Scholarship Program in American Universities) scholarship, a program started by John F. Kennedy. She soon transferred to Radcliffe to live with her new husband, a Ugandan who was at Harvard. After graduating with her BA in 1965, Thelma and her husband returned to Uganda, where they started a family of five while launching their careers. Thelma taught sociology at Makerere University and eventually decided to pursue a master’s in Education at UC Berkeley through an AFGRAD scholarship. She completed her master’s in 1973 and returned to Kenya, where her family had become refugees from violence in Uganda.

While teaching education and humanistic psychology at the University of Nairobi, Thelma conducted an evaluation for the UN Economic Commission for Africa that led to a prestigious career at the UN, where her focus shifted from adult and higher education to African development. She held numerous positions including Deputy Director of the Policy Bureau, UNDP Head of the African Bureau, and ultimately, Assistant Secretary General. Upon retiring from the UN, she decided to complete a PhD in Adult Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Thelma Awori's bi-continental education and career opportunities meant living both in Africa and in the US for extended periods of time. She currently works as the founder of the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund in Liberia and the director of the Institute for Social Transformation in Uganda, which promotes leadership training for transformation.





Socio-Economic Mobility

There is striking socio-economic and career mobility for alumni of international universities, compared to the majority in countries of origin. About one third of surveyed alumni came from poor families that struggled to make ends meet, 57% came from middle-level families, and 12% came from affluent families. Respondents were asked to compare their childhood standard of living to that of the majority in their country of origin, and in a subsequent question were asked to make the same comparison for their current standard of living. Now fully 96% of the surveyed alumni consider themselves better or much better off than the majority in their countries of origin, as compared to 66% during childhood. The data also show generalized upward career mobility in authority and leadership.

Diverse Fields of Study

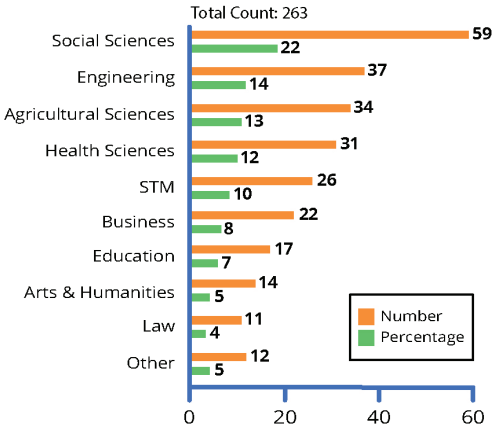
A large majority of the sample alumni, 78%, earned graduate degrees abroad. Many of those who studied at the undergraduate or master's levels went on to pursue higher degrees, constituting in all a highly educated survey sample. Fields of study show a diverse range of disciplines, with the largest percentage in social sciences, primarily economics, followed by the professional fields of engineering, agricultural sciences and health sciences and then by the STM fields (basic sciences, technology/computer science and mathematics). This diversity of fields allowed alumni to contribute to scientific advancement and social change from a wide range of perspectives and expertise.

Career Sectors

The largest number of alumni work in academia or research institutions, as would be expected with the high number of PhDs, followed by private business and not-for-profit organizations. Only 7% report working in the public sector (outside of education). Alumni are working in six principal areas: agriculture and environment, economics and finance, education, health, public administration and social development.

INTL HIGHER EDUCATION

FIELD OF STUDY

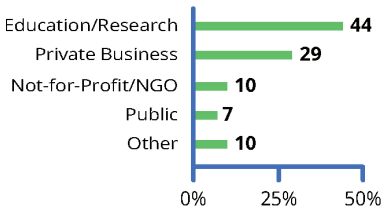


HIGHEST DEGREE

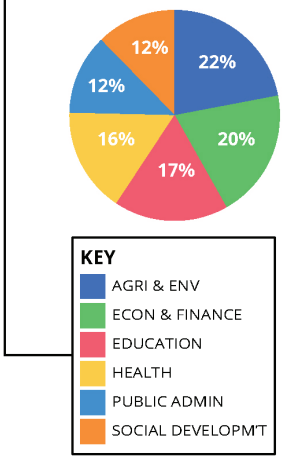
UNDERGRADUATE	MASTERS	DOCTORATE
22%	37%	41%

CAREER

SECTOR



AREA OF EXPERTISE



Linear and Non-Linear Career Paths
Some alumni have pursued non-linear career paths traversing continents, sectors and fields; others have pursued linear, upward-moving paths where careers are built within a single institution — in a majority of cases, around their universities. Nearly half (48%) have stayed within one field over their career, another 31% have shifted within the same general field, and 21% have changed fields once or more often.

International Networks — a Lifeline
Networks and mentors were often established during the international experience and supported the graduates into their careers. Alumni who maintained strong connections with their mentors, across all sectors, were able to weather career and economic hardships more successfully. For those who returned to Africa, international collaborations often proved a "lifeline" during periods of greatest political instability and economic hardship. For example, during the second Obote regime in Uganda, one alumnus survived a period of extreme economic hardship through the research work offered by a former faculty member. Were it not for that support, he would have left his country with his family. In South Africa, one alumna attributes her international research connections as the means she used to establish a strong academic reputation in a post-apartheid society marred by remaining racial and gender discrimination.

International collaborations also allowed alumni to remain up to date in their fields of expertise and thrive professionally. For example, Philip Hendricks, a civil engineer from South Africa, has succeeded in his career partly from the mentoring and international exposure he gained at UC Berkeley.

PHILIP HENDRICKS
[HOME COUNTRY: SOUTH AFRICA]

"For me it's always been about creation, what do I leave behind as a legacy, what do I contribute."

Born in South Africa, Philip Hendricks moved with his family to what was then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, just before starting primary school. His parents, both employed, were able to provide him with a good primary and secondary education. After high school, Philip returned to South Africa where he attended the University of Cape Town to pursue a degree in civil engineering.

As a student of mixed racial background, Philip had to tread carefully, perform well and avoid any political activity. Upon completing

his degree and a post-graduate diploma, Philip worked for three years at a large engineering consulting company in Cape Town. He then transitioned to lecturing at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CAPUT), where he remained for ten years. While at CAPUT, Philip received a British Council scholarship to the University of Dundee, but he rejected it, opting instead to accept USAID support to pursue a master's degree at UC Berkeley, where he studied concrete and transportation engineering.

Philip finished his master's degree in 1992, just as South Africa was emerging from apartheid. A year after his return to CAPUT, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Pretoria offered him a position at South Africa's premium government research institute. Professor Carl Monismith from UC Berkeley encouraged him to accept the offer, and together, they worked on a technology transfer and exchange partnership between CSIR, the University of California and the California Department of Transportation, known today as the Partnered Pavement Research Project (PPRP). The exchange component has trained more than 15 South Africans in engineering, and all have returned to South Africa.

Philip returned to the private sector when he took a position at Aurecon, a large consulting company that designs major infrastructure projects throughout Africa and the developing world. He is now the director of Aurecon's delivery centres and manages nearly 3,000 people.

Interviewees with finance and entrepreneurship motivating their career paths often found that these goals were best served by staying in the diaspora, although the recent entrepreneurial dynamism in Africa is beginning to shift this perception. Nii Sai Sai, a 2011 MBA graduate of UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business, is one of these participants. His profile illustrates how African alumni living in the diaspora have settled into productive and rewarding careers, while still having an eye on returning home.

NII SAI SAI
[HOME COUNTRY: GHANA]

"All along, I have been interested in the social impact of things."

Nii Sai was born and raised in Accra. His parents were college-educated and both spent time studying in Europe. Many of his aunts and uncles live outside of Ghana. While in high school, Nii Sai worked with the Education USA office (formerly USIS) in the American Embassy in Accra to find an undergraduate program in the US. Education USA supported him to take the SAT test and provided advice on the best college fit.

Nii Sai earned his undergraduate degree in engineering sciences at Dartmouth College in 1997, at a time when there were not many career opportunities in Ghana. An internship while at Dartmouth led to his first job after college as an information technology consultant with PwC, and, later, IBM Global Services. Along the way he became a permanent resident of the US and married his wife, who had moved there in 1999 for higher education. Once he had permanent residency status, he began to consider going to graduate school.

Throughout the first 10 years of his career, Nii Sai remained interested in social impact. In 2008, he enrolled in UC Berkeley's MBA program, where he was one of two students from Sub-Saharan Africa. Nii Sai focused on social entrepreneurship, completing a summer internship with his current employer, Aspire Public Schools. It was not easy to transition from the business sector into the social sector, but UC Berkeley's Haas School was "instrumental" in helping him make this transition by providing him with a network of colleagues.

Nii Sai lives in San Francisco with his wife, who is also from Ghana, and their three young children. He is a social entrepreneur, with a strong sense of civic responsibility within his East Bay community, and also with his wife's family farm in Ghana.

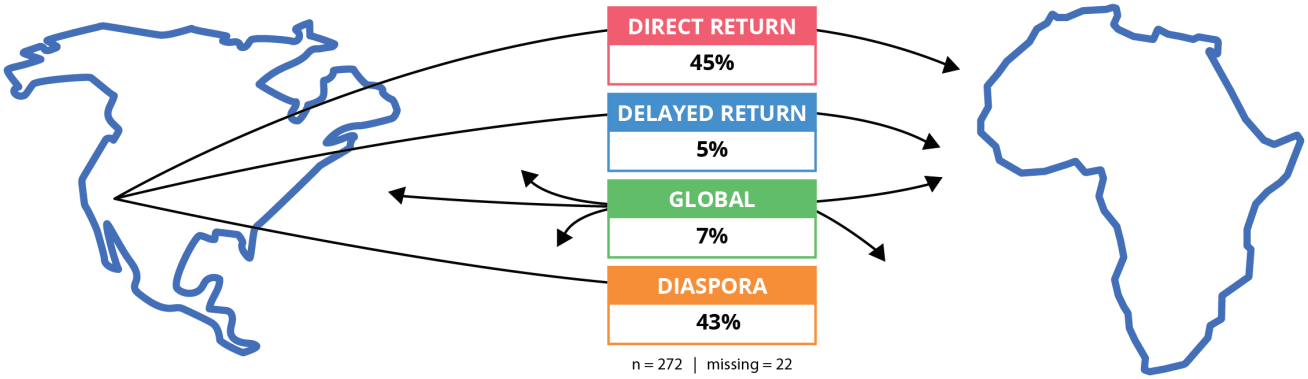
Career Frustrations

Skills learned and degrees earned from international universities contributed both to career successes and frustrations, often depending upon the hierarchical structure and organizational culture of the workplace. Those who returned to Africa upon graduation reported that having an international degree could be a disadvantage in certain circumstances; for instance, when talents and skills are not recognized nor utilized, or when a superior perceives the international graduate as a threat. Others described poor facilities and resource limitations that hindered their career objectives upon return.

Female alumni living in the diaspora and on the continent reported challenges related to gender discrimination in the workplace, as well as difficulties balancing family and their careers. A larger percentage of female graduates (57%), as compared to male graduates (49%), have chosen to live and work in the diaspora, perhaps associated with greater

opportunities for career mobility outside of Africa. Challenges women mentioned include tensions with organizational leadership, under- and unemployment, and not being able to use knowledge gained from their international education.

RETURN PATHS TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (COO)



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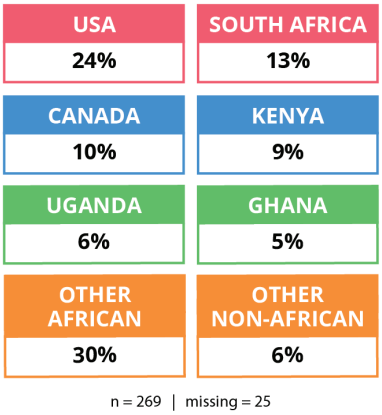
CURRENT RESIDENCE - TOP SIX COUNTRIES



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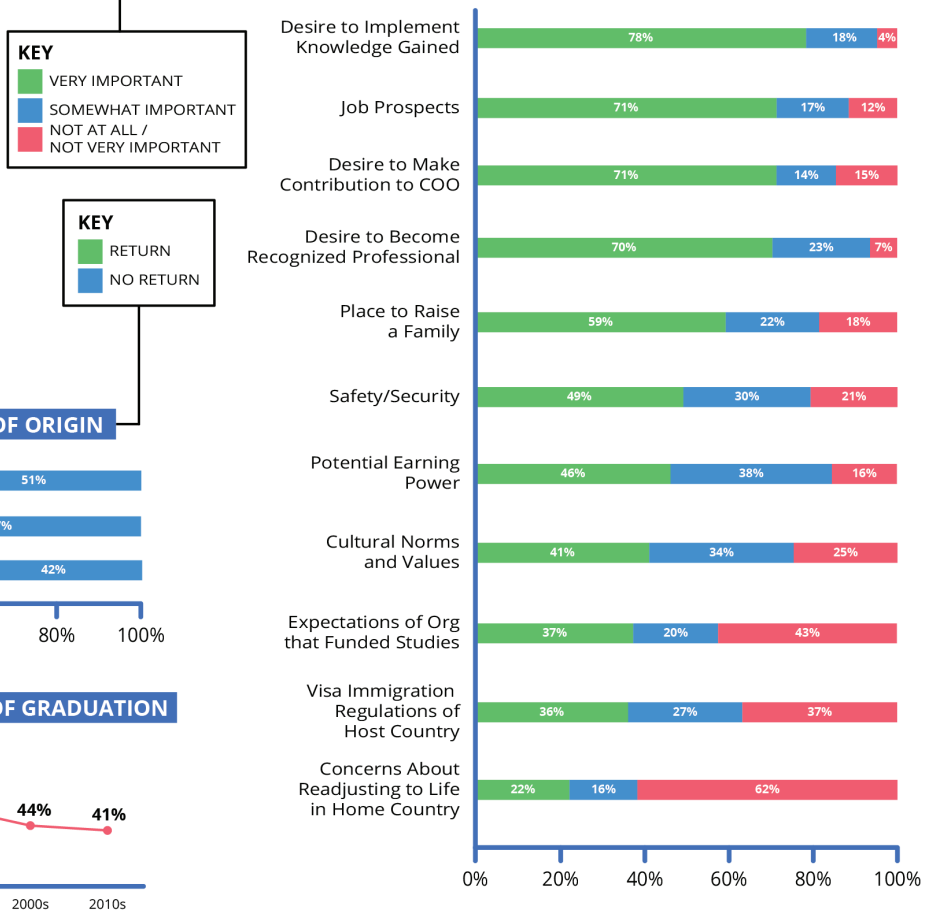
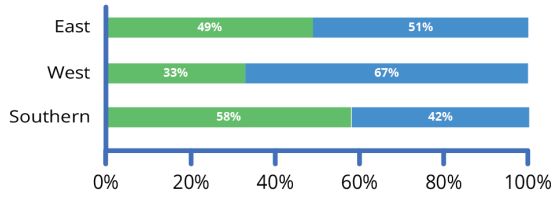
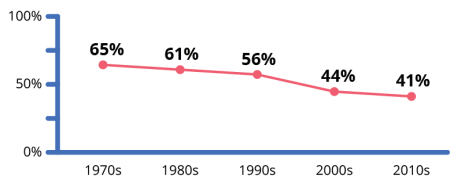
FACTORS INFLUENCING RETURN



RETURN TO COO BY REGION OF ORIGIN



RETURN TO COO BY DECADE OF GRADUATION



[B] RETURN PATHS

A key area of inquiry of this study has been the identification of factors influencing the post-graduation "return" decisions of African alumni of international universities. This section presents the main findings related to return paths over time.

Four Paths

The study identified four return paths for African alumni: direct return (45%, within 12 months of graduation), delayed return (5%, after 12 months up to several decades), global (7%, living and working both in the diaspora and Africa) and diaspora (43%, living and working outside of Africa). Global is a somewhat ambiguous category that is likely to grow in the future with increasing transnational labour mobility.

Delayed Return

A number of alumni delayed return for a year or more to work, secure resources and establish networks to prepare for a successful transition home. Several alumni interviewed for this study delayed their return for more than three decades, pursuing careers and raising children in the diaspora, and eventually returning to their home countries as social entrepreneurs, businesspeople and academic and thought leaders.

Degree, Field and Region of Origin

Alumni who pursued graduate degrees were more likely to return to countries of origin (50%) as compared with undergraduates (30%), and certain fields of study had very high return rates, such as health and agricultural and social sciences, as compared with business, law and engineering. Regression analysis showed that alumni from West Africa were less likely to return as compared with those from East and Southern Africa, underscoring the importance of political and economic context in return decisions. When and where political stability and economic opportunity have improved in West Africa — for instance, over the last two decades in Ghana and Nigeria — there has been an increase in direct and delayed return to these countries.

Role of Scholarships

Presence and type of scholarship were found to be associated with return to country of origin as shown in the table below. Scholarships provided by private foundations, companies and individual sponsors are associated with a higher return rate, as compared with government or university scholarships, while self-funded alumni show the lowest return rate. A large proportion of the self-funded students were undergraduates.

TABLE 3: RETURNED TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN WITHIN 12 MONTHS, BY FUNDING TYPE					
FUNDING TYPE	TOTAL # ALUMNI	YES		NO	
		COUNT	PERCENT	COUNT	PERCENT
Own Resources	106	29	27%	77	73%
Government/University Scholarship	99	62	63%	37	37%
Private Foundation/Company/ Individual Sponsor	38	30	79%	8	21%
Total	243*	121	50%	122	50%

* missing data = 51

Return Decisions and Dilemmas

Between 50% and 70% of survey respondents chose these five factors as influential in their return decisions (in descending order): desire to implement knowledge gained; job prospects; ability to make a contribution to country of origin; desire to become a recognized professional; place to raise a family. Safety/security, potential earning power, cultural norms, visa issues and concerns about readjusting to life in Africa were other factors in decision-making, though of less importance.

"As a young person graduating from college, you are looking to build your career and you want to minimize risk and the unknown. Being in the US, you see a lot of opportunities to do well. There is sort of a pull from the US... but not from back home."

– Ghanaian, residing in the US

Interviews provided insights into the return or stay dilemmas African alumni face upon graduation and the evolving considerations influencing their decisions over time. The main considerations influencing return decisions are:

1. **Expectations** Alumni in Africa faced pressures to return home to fulfill a host of obligations including contributing financially, giving back to society through one's profession and modeling success to the younger generation. Alumni in the diaspora described their success as tied to sending back remittances to support siblings and other children to pursue education. The desire to impact African society was a motivating factor among those who chose to return as well as many who chose to remain abroad. Patriotism played a significant role in return decisions for some alumni, as in the case of Rwandan MSU alumnus, George Nyombaire, who returned twice to his country, once as a former refugee, and again as a PhD in agricultural sciences.

2. **Career Opportunities** Those who pursued fields of study that were directly relevant to opportunities in their home contexts, such as in agricultural or health sciences, were able to return home, apply their learning and advance professionally upon completion of their studies. More recent alumni emphasized emerging markets and entrepreneurial opportunities as incentives to return home, both for individual gain and to contribute to the social transformation and economic development of Africa.

3. **Financial Considerations** Large salary differentials between professionals in Africa and abroad, particularly in the academic and public sectors, factored into decision-making to different degrees. Remaining abroad to pursue financial stability was viewed as a sensible strategy — particularly among alumni from families with limited means — to acquire the resources and relationships for an eventual successful return home.

4. **Economic and Political Context** Political and economic conditions in home countries at the time of graduation were a key factor influencing both return decisions and experiences upon return. Many interviewees spoke about political repression or instability, and economic collapse, at different periods of time in countries of origin (e.g. Uganda, Rwanda, Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa), conditions that deterred return for some and delayed return for others.

5. **Staying Connected** International networks and collaborations were crucial for alumni, following any of the four paths, to overcome challenges, thrive professionally and stay connected. Alumni from multiple fields who returned to Africa cited long-term, rewarding, international collaborations with their *alma mater* and other institutions. For those in the diaspora, connections with home in many forms, including joint projects with colleagues in Africa, remain vital for sustaining their identity and sense of purpose.

"I think the continent is desperate for people with exposure and skills and networks... If you do come back, there's this sort of open field of opportunities that you don't necessarily see while you're [abroad]. So it's worthwhile keeping your eye on opportunities back at home."

– Ghanaian, residing in Ghana

These findings suggest caution in framing the debate about "return" in moral terms, presenting a false dichotomy. Instead, shared values characterize all groups of alumni, while differing opportunities and personal circumstances contribute to their diverse pathways upon completion of their studies, and over a lifetime.

The profile of Dr. Isaac Minde, a Tanzanian who attended MSU, illustrates how his international education reinforced his goals and commitment to contribute to agricultural development in Africa, and how his pan-African career eventually led back to his country of origin.

ISAAC MINDE
[HOME COUNTRY: TANZANIA]

"When I was [at MSU], I was dreaming about home, Tanzania. But my colleagues...they were saying, CIMMYT, IITA, the World Bank! And then I was asking myself, what are those things? I came here and I'm going back home, right?"

Born on a family farm in northern Tanzania, agriculture has been a part of Isaac Minde's life since his childhood. He was born in the Kilimanjaro region and spent his early life on a smallholder farm, where his family grew coffee, bananas, vegetables and fruit.

After graduating from Morogoro University in Dar es Salaam, he became the Agricultural Officer in the Manyoni district in the Singida region of central Tanzania, one of the poorest in the country. Isaac spent two years in the region, with much of his time spent administering food aid due to a harsh climate. When he was offered a World Bank scholarship to return to Morogoro University, he jumped at the chance.

With a Master's in Agricultural Sciences under his belt, he won a Ford Foundation fellowship that sent him to MSU for a PhD in Agricultural Economics. Isaac intentionally selected a dissertation topic that would take him back to Tanzania for research.

He graduated from MSU in 1985 and returned to his faculty post in Morogoro. Eight years later, Isaac took a series of jobs across the continent with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). In 2011, he joined MSU via the University of Pretoria, serving as team leader for an Africa-wide agricultural development project involving four universities.

In his successful international career, Isaac has faced many challenges — including the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the 2008 economic crash in Zimbabwe — while always maintaining a strong connection to his family and colleagues in Tanzania.

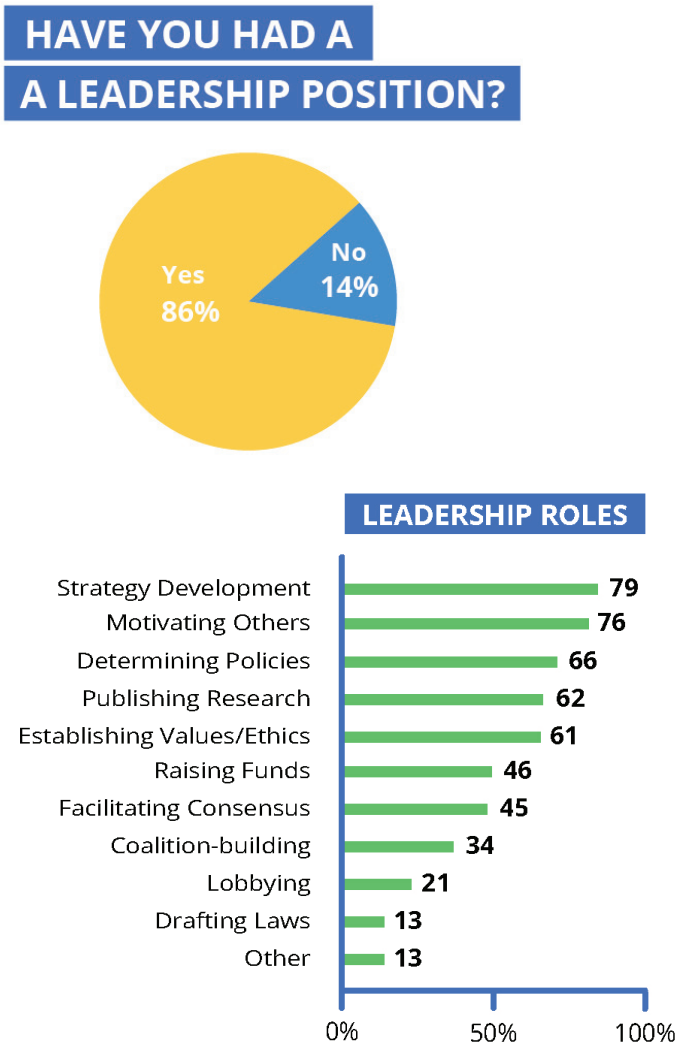
Isaac is currently the Deputy Director of the iAGRI program based at Sokoine University of Agriculture, which focuses on long-term degree training, collaborative research and institutional transformation to build sustainable food systems.

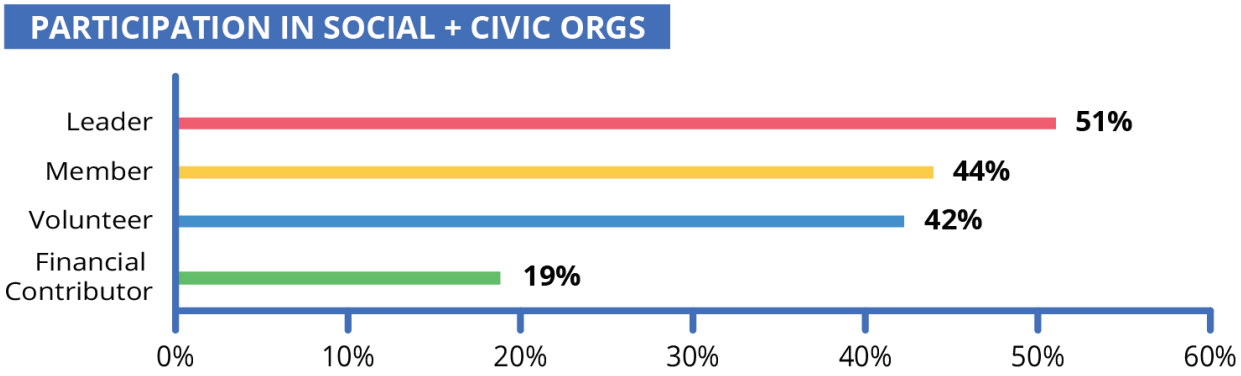
[C] LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Most African alumni were "lifted up" by family, sponsors, scholarships and society at large and are now "giving back" as socially engaged citizens. Many fulfill social commitments through their careers, while others contribute through financial contributions and participation in social and civic organizations. The data show that early childhood influences combined with educational opportunities, within Africa and internationally, have provided the motivation and capability for a majority of alumni to assume leadership positions. There are clear and compelling examples of some of these leaders generating truly transformative change.

Leadership in Careers

Eighty-six percent of the African alumni have held leadership positions in their respective careers. Forty percent self-identify as "social entrepreneurs." The leadership roles they exercise demonstrate the ways in which individuals can influence significant changes in the organizations that they work for and the people and communities they serve. For instance, developing strategies, determining policies, and establishing values/ethics — roles played by more than 60% of alumni — are fundamental contributions to social change. A smaller but significant number are leading political change through coalition-building, lobbying and drafting laws.





Leadership In Social/Civic Organizations
Outside of their professions, nearly 80% of alumni are active in social and civic organizations in some capacity, primarily within Africa, but also in diaspora communities. The high percentage of alumni who play a leadership role (51%) indicates a broad willingness to give considerable time and resources to social and civic activities, as well as a capacity for organizational leadership that is recognized by constituent communities.

Transformative Leadership
A significant number of African alumni interviewed for this study are leaders of transformative change in and outside of their countries of origin (see Appendix B). These alumni have generated social change of a transformative nature, affecting mindsets of institutions and governments, creating new organizations and ways of doing things, and improving the lives of large numbers of people. African alumni are "making change happen" primarily in these fields:

i. higher education, research and science;
ii. private business and social enterprise;
iii. creative arts;
iv. government and public service;
v. community engagement; and
vi. pan-African policy and leadership.

Social Engagement
Many of the interviewees spoke at length about members of their families as influential figures and strong role models of social and civic engagement. Irrespective of social class, these families instilled both the value of education and the value of helping members of the community in most need.

"My parents always taught us you are not the centre of the world. Know who you are and be proud of yourself, know your values, know your religion...respect elders, take care of your younger siblings and respect your older siblings, and try to know others who are not like you."

- Gambian, residing in Benin and Togo

Often grandparents, especially grandmothers, passed down traditional knowledge, customs, and values, and fortified life-long connections with the rural villages to which alumni returned later in life as role models themselves. Nearly all alumni spoke of parents and extended family that viewed education as a vehicle for social and economic mobility. For the poor (39%), this implied large sacrifices to ensure that school fees were paid, or to forgo labour when children went to school on bursaries/scholarships. Partly as a result

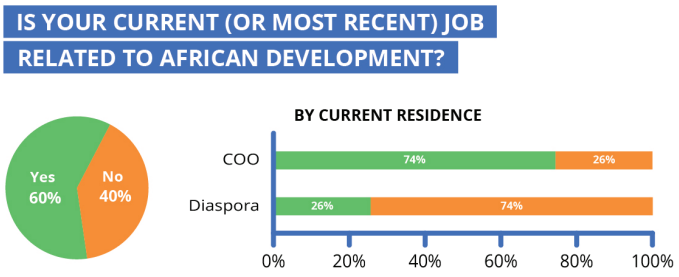
of these sacrifices, and strong family values, alumni followed in their footsteps to support younger siblings with education and the community at large in some cases.

Multiple Arenas for "Giving Back"

Alumni are "giving back" to society in multiple arenas and to varying degrees, depending upon their passions and expertise. The eight principal arenas of social and civic engagement, within and outside of careers, are:

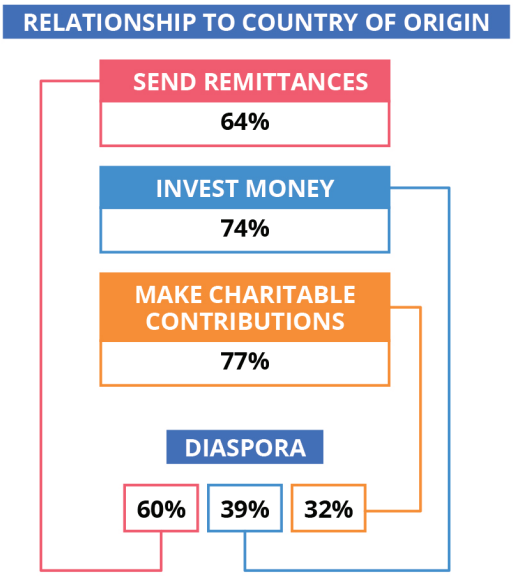
i. higher education and writing;
ii. community development and empowerment;
iii. non-profit humanitarian organizations;
iv. bridging African and international institutions;
v. social/economic development
vi. through international agencies;
vii. remittances and philanthropy; advocacy; and
viii. promoting youth leadership/ mentoring youth.

When asked, "Have you influenced positive social change?" responses present a bell curve distribution from "not at all" to "a very high degree," results likely to be related to age and stage of life. Thirty-eight percent believe they have impacted social change to a "high" or "very high" degree.



"I came here for a special reason. We have a team of very senior professors retired from different universities across the globe. With our vice chancellor, I said, 'I know we can change absolutely this place.' We have done it."

– Ugandan, residing in Uganda

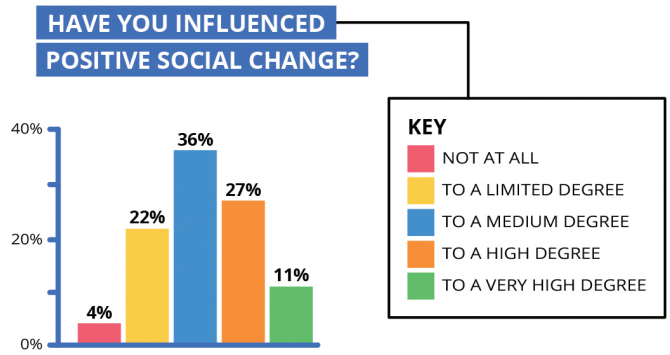


African Development Careers

Sixty percent of alumni are currently employed in local, national or international positions directly related to African social and economic development (74% of those residing in country of origin, 26% of those residing in the diaspora, including 5% in "other Africa"). Over 20% of African alumni living outside of Africa have positions related to African development, such as professionals with the World Bank, United Nations, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and USAID, among others.

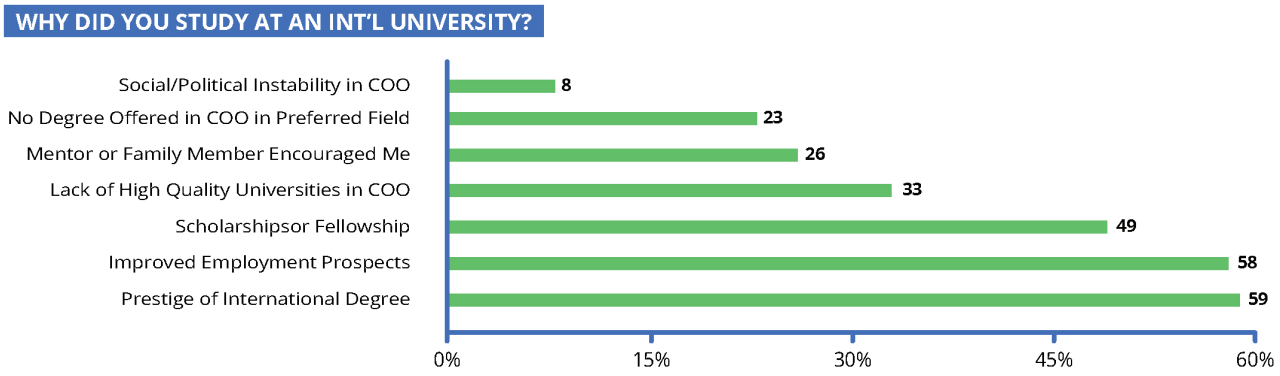
Engaging from the Diaspora

Remittances or financial contributions "sent home" to pay school fees of siblings, nieces and nephews, or to support family members, especially parents, in other ways, are an enormously important way in which African alumni contribute to their communities (64% total, 60% in diaspora). It is striking that almost 40% of African alumni living in the diaspora are making investments in their country of origin, paving the way for an eventual return in some cases. Alumni in the diaspora are also contributing their knowledge and skills through academic and other exchanges, although sufficient opportunities for meaningful and sustained engagement are still inadequate.



[D] VALUE OF AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The study has presented a unique opportunity, particularly for participating universities, to learn about the post-graduation "value" of an international education from the perspectives of African alumni. The relevant questions are: Why did you choose to study at an international university? What experiences and components of your international education are most relevant to your work now? How did your international education impact your professional and personal networks inside and outside of Africa? Would you encourage African students today to pursue higher education abroad?



Five major benefits emerge from the interview analysis on the perceived values of an international education:

i. prestige and reputation;
ii. critical thinking;
iii. practical learning;
iv. exposure and diversity; and
v. international collaboration and networking.

Alumna Sylvia Natukunda from Uganda described how an EARTH education prepared her to "go into any culture and survive," and also gave her the practical skills and confidence to start a business and represent her country in international forums. While all alumni expressed positive memories and benefits from their international education, the interviews also reveal serious challenges faced by some, both academically and socially.

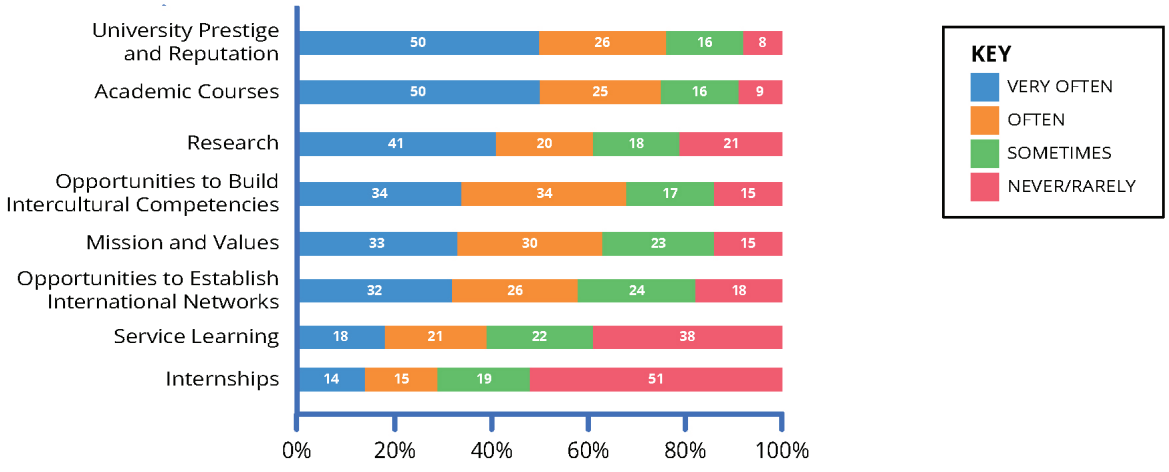
Motivations to Study Abroad

The data show a combination of pull and push factors that explain the opportunity and motivation to pursue higher education abroad. Prestige and employment prospects associated with an international education, in combination with a scholarship opportunity and the encouragement of mentors or family members, are decisive. Sometimes these pull factors are reinforced by frustration with lower university quality at home, or the inexistence of undergraduate majors or graduate degrees in the preferred field of study. As many African-based universities increase the range and quality of fields of study, these push factors will become less relevant, especially at the undergraduate level.

Better off Compared to Peers

Most alumni believe they have fared "better" or "much better off" than their peers who did not study abroad in three aspects: "finding a first job," "career advancement," and "making a positive difference in country of origin," irrespective of their return path.

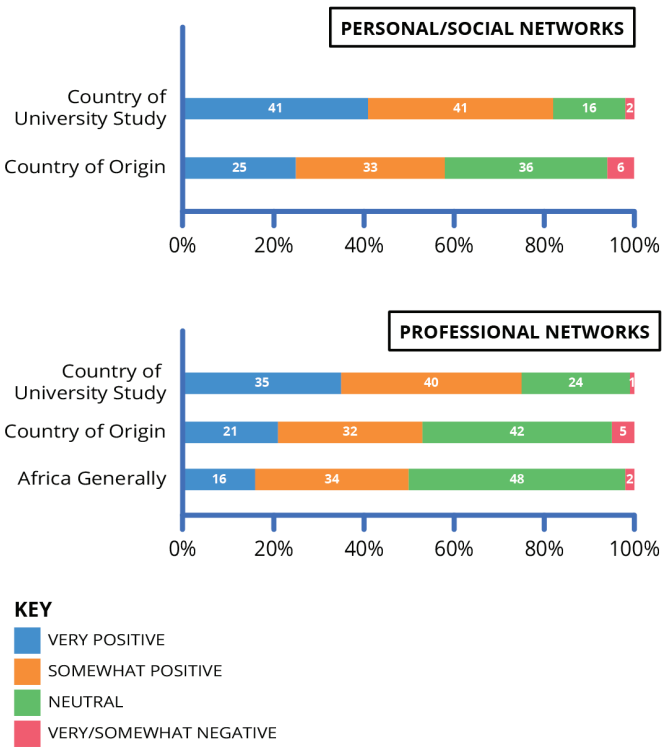
HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THESE INT'L EDUCATION COMPONENTS IN YOUR CURRENT WORK?



Relevance of International Education

Key aspects of the international education experience continue to be relevant and employed regularly by alumni in their current positions, particularly "university prestige and reputation," "academic courses," "research," "intercultural competencies," "mission and values" and "international networks." Interestingly, the value of academic courses and research extends beyond alumni in academia to all sectors.

HOW HAS AN INT'L EDUCATION IMPACTED YOUR SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS?



ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5, HOW DID YOUR POST-GRADUATION EXPERIENCES COMPARE WITH PEERS WHO DID NOT STUDY ABROAD?

	N	MEAN	ST DEV
FINDING A FIRST JOB	216	4.40	0.88
CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION	227	4.32	0.92
MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN COO	215	4.08	1.19

1 = MUCH WORSE OFF
2 = SOMEWHAT WORSE OFF
3 = NO DIFFERENCE
4 = SOMEWHAT BETTER OFF
5 = MUCH BETTER OFF

Social and Professional Networks

We have seen the critical role of international professional networks, particularly in expanding career opportunities for alumni. We have also seen how professional and personal networks are called on to marshal resources to invest in businesses and non-profit organizations on the continent, and how university networks, in particular, enable enduring and productive global research collaborations. Personal networks are a prominent way for alumni to learn of job opportunities and, for some, pave the way to an eventual return to Africa after extended periods in the diaspora.

As expected, a majority of alumni of international universities were able to create and strengthen international social and professional networks. More surprisingly, data show that 50% of African alumni also strengthened their professional networks in Africa during their international education, and the other 50% claim "neutral" impact. This finding merits further exploration to understand precisely how networks in Africa have been created or sustained by African alumni while studying abroad, so that these mechanisms can be replicated to assist more students.

Confidence as Scholars and Innovators

Analysis of interviews revealed enduring values and benefits of an international education, such as exposure to new ideas, critical thinking and use of practical teaching methods. Often alumni referred to the critical thinking pedagogy and practical methods at US and Canadian universities, as well as EARTH University, as important for building their confidence as scholars and innovators, skills that were subsequently leveraged for career advancement and effecting social change.

Exposure and Diversity

Undoubtedly, one of the most important values of an international university education is the exposure it provides, not only to new ideas and knowledge, but also to the culture of the country of study and the diverse student body. All alumni cited exposure to students of different nationalities, religions, ethnicities and sexual orientations as pivotal for expanding their worldview and breaking down previously held stereotypes. The value of exposure cut both ways, building intercultural competency and tolerance on the part of the African alumni and their fellow non-African students.

For those who returned to Africa, having greater intercultural competency was a huge advantage for managing and leading multi-ethnic organizations. Another influential element was exposure to democratic forms of government and civic participation in the US and Canada, as well as relatively less rigid class boundaries than what they were used to in Africa.

EXPOSURE/DIVERSITY

> *"It was the first time I lived with people of other nationalities and races. Berkeley taught me to appreciate the oneness of people and that perceived differences are an illusion. (South Africa)"*

> *"The world is a global village. There is no piece of this globe that can be viewed in isolation, and you need to know what the rest of the world is do a good job here. As much as we want students, once you get your Master's, I say "now try the other universities overseas, so you can get that international exposure. (Uganda)"*

> *"I looked at it not just as a place to learn new skills but I wanted to immerse myself completely into the culture of Americans,I wanted to be culturally competent, I really wanted to understand what America's all about. (Kenya)"*

Life-Long Friendships

Alumni also referred to their positive contributions to correcting misconceptions and stereotypes about Africa and Africans by non-African students (domestic and international). For many alumni, these bridged barriers led to life-long friendships.

Challenges

Some African alumni faced significant academic, social and financial challenges during their international education, although all participants in this study were able to overcome those challenges to obtain a degree. Alumni who had only partial scholarships reported anxiety about sustaining themselves, and their families, in some cases, and challenges navigating the work world as students. Social problems were mainly related to initial cultural adjustments and finding fellow African or non-African friends. Graduate students experienced far fewer challenges, generally, than undergraduates, largely because they had the maturity to deal with social issues, such as racism and homesickness, and a more advanced capacity to focus and overcome academic challenges.

CHALLENGES

"When I graduated, I was the only black person, whether African American or African, who graduated from the mechanical engineering department. I was the only one in the whole year. When you go to class, you feel different, and if you miss class, the professor knows that you are not there. (Ghana)"

"So, most of my younger sisters and brothers rely on me to help them. When I informed them I am leaving for one year, I won't be getting paid and all this, it was not only me, it was the whole home environment. I was disturbing that environment, so I had to try to make sure it was not brutal. (Ivory Coast)"

"There are times when I would give up because it is a very tough place. I felt that there was no place for us from other countries to get support. I felt that most of the students there were from the Asian communities. They did not want to work with us. They thought that we were not intelligent enough. (Kenya)"

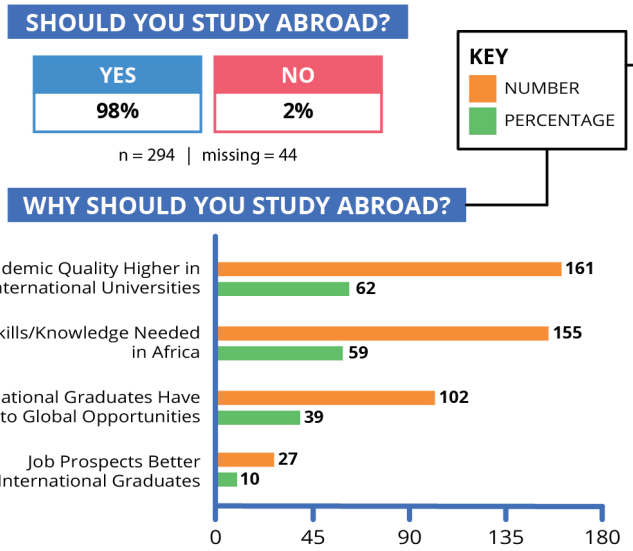
"It was a huge shock. Quickly, I realized, I made the dumbest decision in my life. When I would read I had no problem, but when people would speak I had a hard time understanding. They (MSU faculty) helped me manage that shock, and learn to write like in the American system. I knew I could not fail. Because I had never failed in my life. (Senegal)"

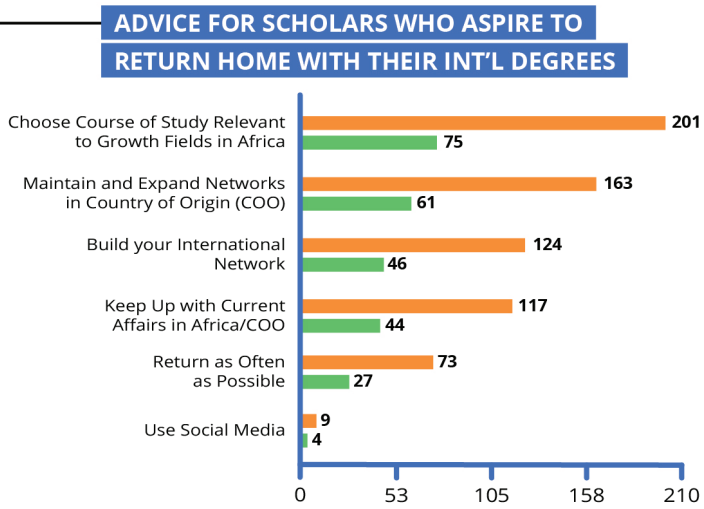
Overall, the findings show that an international education is associated with improved employment prospects (irrespective of location), and that key components of an international university experience continue to be useful in their current work. Whether because of prestige and reputation, the academic skills gained, intercultural competencies, or international networks, or a combination, the majority of surveyed alumni are confident that the international university experience has served them well.

"Given that you're providing someone with an opportunity, four years doing something which will be a launching pad for everything else they're going to do in their lives, I don't know how you quantify that. That's a job for social scientists. It will have a transformative impact and if they take any part of that back to their lives in their home countries, it will have been worthwhile."

– South African, residing in the diaspora

ADVICE FOR CURRENT SCHOLARS





As part of this study, we were interested to learn what advice African alumni from international universities would give to current and future African students undertaking similar journeys. What could current African scholars learn from their predecessors? This is of particular interest to The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program because of the hundreds of Scholars earning undergraduate and graduate degrees at all of the partner universities that participated in this study (except SFU).

Nearly all surveyed alumni encourage African students to pursue study abroad, particularly at the graduate level in fields of study relevant to African development. This in itself is a striking commendation of the international university experience, with this general advice crossing generations, regions of origin, return paths and career trajectories.

FOR YOUR CAREER

USE CAREER CENTER

> *"I would recommend that everyone reach out to the career services on their campus. You can find jobs on the continent .... there are a lot of companies who do business all over. They want to hire people who have the knowledge on the ground (as Africans) and at the same time the Western training...."*

PREPARE FOR MULTIPLE CAREERS

> *"Get involved as much as you can. We know that most people are going to change career two or three times in their life - what you don't know is what those careers are going to be. If you just stay in your own discipline, specifically a scientific discipline, there's the danger of being too narrow."*

GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY FIRST

> *"A Berkeley degree can make you rise quickly to a management position. But I'd like to discourage you from that. You will waste your talent. Get your hands dirty first."*

LEARN TO ADAPT

> *"If you're moving back, learn to adapt. It's not easy; the comforts are different so find alternatives, apply wisdom and be ready for an adventure. It's worth it."*

ADVICE FOR CURRENT SCHOLARS

QUALITY AND SKILLS NEEDED IN AFRICA

The top three reasons given to study abroad are: "higher academic quality," "skills/ knowledge needed in Africa," and "access to global opportunities." For scholars who aspire to pursue careers within Africa, the single most common piece of advice is, "choose a course of study relevant to growth fields in Africa," followed by "maintain and expand networks in country of origin." Alumni suggest that heeding this advice will facilitate a post-graduation transition into meaningful employment with decent remuneration.

NETWORK AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Alumni advise students to be proactive about building relationships with faculty and other potential mentors that will endure beyond graduation. The advice to "network, network, and network," on and off campus, is pertinent for all African students no matter which return path they choose. Some alumni advise students to incorporate community service into their student experience, connecting with people and organizations beyond their university campuses and building goodwill for potential ongoing relationships.

SEEK SUPPORT IN CASE OF CRISES

Study abroad can be overwhelming. When African students face fears about failure, isolation, or other matters, alumni advise seeking support right away from trusted adults and friends.

TRANSITION TO WORK IN AFRICA

For those seeking careers in the private sector, alumni warn against overlooking multiple resources on campuses, such as career centres, that can help identify companies and employers seeking talented individuals to work in Africa.

Alumni also advise students to prepare for multiple careers over a lifetime by gaining exposure to different disciplines, experiences and social groups. This advice is consonant with the careers of many African alumni interviewed for this study who have used the prestige of their degrees and their international networks often with increasing authority within and across sectors — and sometimes across continents. Finally, students are advised to adapt their material expectations to the realities in Africa, and to be "ready for adventure." Even though it's not easy, "it's worth it."

"I think it's good to have the first degree at home. That international exposure is quite important at the graduate level, and even getting connections."

– Ugandan residing in Uganda

FIRST DEGREE AT HOME

Many alumni, more so among recipients of graduate degrees, advise African youth aspiring to careers within Africa to pursue their "first degree at home," and a subsequent graduate degree in an international university for exposure and specialization. This advice is associated with trends in improved quality and diversity of higher education institutions in Africa, particularly in the larger, middle-income countries.

PROGRAMMING AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this retrospective tracer study of African alumni of international universities have several important policy and programming implications for scholarship programs, The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, in particular, as well as for universities that host and educate African students.

THE MASTERCARD FOUNDATION

The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program encourages recipients to exercise their personal agency regarding educational and career opportunities as well as their aspirations to be agents of change. Although there is a strong emphasis on post-graduation return to the African continent, the Program takes a flexible approach by supporting diverse "transitions" of Scholars to meaningful work. The findings from this study concur with the need for this flexibility. The implications and suggestions outlined below follow from this general conclusion.

Alumni inclinations toward social engagement or "giving back" were formed early in life, strongly influenced by family values and education experiences in primary and secondary school (tertiary for some). The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program should continue to include and prioritize evidence of these values in their application and selection processes, thereby increasing the likelihood that Scholars will prioritize social and civic engagement when they return home, and in diaspora communities for those that remain.

There are various types of post-graduation "transitions" that we can anticipate for MasterCard Foundation Scholars based on our research:

i. direct return to Africa;
ii. remain in diaspora to attend graduate school (master's or PhD);
iii. remain in diaspora to access work opportunities, with the possibility of delayed return; and
iv. direct return to Africa to work, with eventual seeking of a higher degree or outside career opportunity.

The challenge for the Foundation is to provide a flexible menu of supports to meet the needs of these distinct paths, with the twin goals of promoting individual success and continued strong connectedness and engagement with Africa.

There is a wealth of talent and goodwill among African alumni of partner universities, both in Africa and the diaspora, that could be tapped to support current and future Scholars. Nearly all surveyed alumni (roughly 250) have stated their willingness to serve as mentors and advisors of Scholars and at least 25% are in positions to offer substantive summer internships in their respective organizations. Alumni see mentoring Scholars as a way for them to "give back" to their *alma mater* universities, as well as help African youth to make successful post-graduation transitions. The Scholars Community digital platform (in development) will offer a mechanism for this type of engagement and support.

Given the growing importance of personal and professional networking for career success in and outside of Africa, the building of a dynamic and flexible Scholars Community is a clear priority. Many alumni have maintained

close contact with friends made during study abroad; some have formed "communities of practice" that they tap into for professional and personal advice, particularly when planning transitions back to Africa. Others have lost contact with fellow alumni and express regrets about this.

The networks and collaborations obtained through study abroad have been pivotal in facilitating the successes of transformative leaders. Alumni who returned to Africa with strong international and academic networks laid the groundwork for future collaborations, and have fared better under difficult re-entry or subsequent conditions. They have also thrived when those conditions improved. This finding suggests the need for deliberate and proactive support for initiating and supporting lasting relationships between MasterCard Foundation Scholars and their international academic communities (e.g. faculty, staff, students, advisors, professional associations) during their study abroad.

Alumni who remained in the diaspora, or "delayed return," have maintained strong connections with Africa that include, but go beyond, remittances. A sizeable number of African alumni of international universities in the diaspora are seeking ways to meaningfully match and share their talents with identified needs on the continent. The potential for "brain drain" evolving into "brain circulation" is considerable and, thus far, under-utilized. In designing their scholarship evaluation or assessment strategy, The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program should consider how Scholars who remain in the diaspora after graduation or delay return might contribute their expertise and other resources to the continent, contributing to social change in significant ways.

Nearly all of the participating alumni for this study, crossing generations, return paths and career trajectories, would encourage current and future African students to pursue study abroad. However, many alumni recommended that Africans pursue their first degree at home, and their second or higher degrees in an international university. Alumni also reflected on the tremendous gains from an international education experience, particularly exposure to diverse ideas and people as well as access to excellent courses and facilities for specialization in particular fields not commonly offered in African universities. This would suggest that the Scholars Program should continue to support excellent Scholars to pursue graduate degrees targeted toward fields of great importance for African development.

The cogent set of benefits that African alumni identified from their international education should be further examined for adaptation and infusion into higher-level African institutions. Through diverse types of university collaboration and exchanges, and by tapping into the talent and advice of higher education leaders, The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program can support bridges between international and African educational institutions with a potential for large impact. This is already happening for a few small, high-quality universities in Africa, including Ashesi University in Ghana. Founder and President Patrick Awuah infused Ashesi principles and curricula with liberal arts qualities learned from his undergraduate education in the US, together with a problem-solving orientation gained while working at Microsoft. He leveraged his business and finance skills

learned at UC Berkeley, along with a strong international network, to build and support Ashesi from its early days. Patrick has integrated "international exposure" into Ashesi by offering opportunities for students to travel, study and intern abroad for several weeks or months at a time as part of their degree program.

PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

The African Alumni Project also yielded important programming and policy implications for partner universities, although each partner has unique organizational structures and programs, which invites caution in overgeneralizing. Principal investigators from the six partner universities outlined key inputs and institutional learning from the African Alumni Project in the table provided in Appendix A.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, a strong case could be made that the deepest and most profound impacts of "global universities" on African development are through the sustained, often transformative, contributions of their African alumni. The research has revealed an under-tapped potential to further the global credibility, branding and outreach of partner universities by systematically documenting and including the impacts of their international alumni. This study can be leveraged to assess impact from all African alumni living on the continent and in the diaspora, not just the "stars," and to foster continuing academic collaborations with their *alma mater* university.

There are important lessons to be learned from this study to better serve African students, help them to thrive educationally, and support them through their transition to successful careers. Our research indicates areas where partner universities could improve the ways they serve international students, and African students in particular. Whereas the evidence shows strong favourable marks for many components of their international education programs, universities were not adequately prepared to assist African students (now alumni) who faced serious adjustment issues upon matriculation, such as racial prejudice, social and academic isolation, and anxiety about finances, particularly among undergraduates. Another finding points to the need for on-campus career services to improve their outreach to international students and expand their career opportunities for students aspiring to work in Africa.

The study discovered that tracing of international alumni is under-resourced among all partner universities; the African Alumni Project was pioneering in conducting a systematic, retrospective tracer study of African alumni. Given the potential benefits for university communities and their credibility as "global" institutions, we recommend that Offices of Institutional Research, in particular, continue to conduct retrospective tracer studies of their alumni from Africa and other understudied alumni populations.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This multi-university study yielded data and research findings with timely implications for international universities and for scholarship programs motivated by theories of change based on notions of "go back and give back." Resource limitations did not allow for full analysis of the wealth of data collected during the research project. Most compelling is the data set of 100 coded interview transcripts that could be further analyzed to discern patterns of behaviour and outcomes related to key demographic, educational and employment variables.

One area for future research is to explore how socioeconomic background and gender have influenced decisions regarding return paths. More generally, how does our study contribute to wider discussions about "brain drain" versus "de-territorialization" and trans-national migration of talent in a globalized economy? And how has social and civic engagement by alumni changed over time, with what variations among sub-groups? We also wish to further analyze the data to examine the "critical mass" theory in the context of African alumni of international universities by studying clusters of impact in particular countries and fields, or from particular universities.

Other universities have expressed interest to likewise trace and understand the career and life trajectories of their African alumni, including universities within Africa with pan-African student populations (e.g. Makerere University in Uganda, Ashesi University in Ghana, University of Pretoria and University of Cape Town in South Africa). Having tested a mixed methods approach with considerable success, this project may now be extended to include more partners with wider implications. Already, one extension of this project is an associated book in production, "International Scholarships for Higher Education: Pathways to Social Change" (Palgrave MacMillan Press, co-editors Dassin, Marsh and Mawer, publication date January 2017).

PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS, INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING AND DATA MANAGEMENT

PARTNER: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Many units on campus cooperated with the first "tracking and tracing" phase. The Graduate Division provided the most comprehensive list, supplemented by School of Public Health, Haas Business School and the Law School, which have their own Alumni Units. The undergraduate registrar provided records for UG alumni. Other cooperating units: the International House, International Relations and the Center for African Studies. The Graduate Division and International Relations contributed work-study students for tracking. The Graduate Division contributed the services of their top survey/data management expert for all technical issues related to the online survey (about two weeks' time total). The Graduate Division also contributed time and expertise from their website design team for creating the African Alumni Project website (africanalumni.berkeley.edu). The Institute for the Study of Societal Issues contributed space and supplies for research meetings and workshops.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

Articles about the African Alumni Project published by the Graduate Division and Berkeley News (http://news.berkeley.edu/2015/11/16/african-alumni-project/) have helped to raise the visibility of the research project and UC Berkeley African alumni. There is high-level interest by the Chancellor's Office and Cal Alumni Association to incorporate the research findings into the campus' understanding of its global impact — in this case, Africa — and to possibly extend the research methodology to other understudied sub-populations. International Relations will use the findings to reconnect with interested African alumni, feature profiles of alumni and potentially start "Cal Clubs" in regions of Africa where there are clusters of alumni. The research findings are also interesting to faculty across campus who have taught African students over the decades and are seeing the "fruit" of their teaching in significant contributions in diverse fields across the African continent. Finally, initial discussions have begun with the Study Abroad Program to explore linking Cal African alumni with Cal students (African and non-African) seeking opportunities to study, volunteer, intern or work in Africa.

DATA MANAGEMENT

Alumni records were only digitized in 1996, so records before 1996 are incomplete, although many Schools/Departments across campus have partially converted paper records to electronic form. This process continues. The Graduate Division and Undergraduate Registrar are responsible for keeping records of enrolled students for graduate and undergraduate degrees, respectively, and for all degree-holders. Records for African students are also incomplete because African origin is only detected if the permanent address supplied by the student corresponds to an African country. International Relations keeps its own set of data on international alumni, which is also incomplete and only partially updated. Systems are currently being digitized, centralized and updated. Therefore, the data compiled for this research project — supplemented by an intensive tracing effort using social media – underestimates the true number of African alumni.

APPENDIX A

PARTNER: EARTH UNIVERSITY

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Nico Evers dedicated time as Principal Investigator (PI). He collaborated on the following project activities: 1) co-organizer and co-facilitator of the launch workshop; 2) member of the Institutional Review Board and Governance Working Groups; 3) member of the Qualitative and Narrative Research team; 4) co-preparation and development of a comprehensive alumni interview guide (template); and 5) conducted interviews with EARTH African alumni in Uganda and Kenya. Staff time, travel costs and daily allowances were paid by EARTH University, approved by Provost Daniel Sherrard. EARTH also paid staff time for transcription and coding of interviews using the web-based Dedoose qualitative data analysis program. Visiting professor Bret Shaw (University of Wisconsin-Madison, on sabbatical at EARTH) advised both the quantitative and the qualitative teams on methods, contributed to survey design and conducted interviews with African EARTH Alumni via Skype and on the EARTH campus. EARTH's alumni office provided the contact data of the alumni, and Communications staff assisted with design of the survey invitation/newsletter.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

EARTH University was very interested in verifying how the different elements of its educational model (including the curriculum and emphasis on leadership and practical skills-building through experiential and student centred-learning) contributed to EARTH African alumni's "going back and giving back" trajectories. Having a track record of a high percentage of alumni returning to their home countries, EARTH's assumption was that there existed a positive relation between EARTH's educational model and the going back and giving back of its alumni. The interviews gave us insight into these elements and generally confirmed our assumptions, but there is more to learn that can guide program and curriculum reforms as needed.

DATA MANAGEMENT

EARTH University's alumni office administers data of all alumni. Names and contact information of EARTH´s African alumni were provided to us by the alumni office. Therefore, we did not face any issues in the process.

PARTNER: MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Amy Jamison served as the principal investigator for MSU on this study. Her time was donated to the project by the Dean of International Studies and Programs. In addition to Dr. Jamison's time, MSU's ISP Dean also paid for a student worker, above and beyond the student labour supported by the grant. This extra student labour was dedicated to transcribing and coding the qualitative interviews. The total salary contributions that MSU made to the Alumni Study equal $27,200. Dr. Jamison was also able to travel to Uganda for data collection because she coordinated her travel with a trip to Rwanda for another project. This meant that her flight fees were significantly reduced since the other project paid for the international flight to Africa. MSU's Center for Gender in Global Context also covered the expenses for Dr. Jamison to travel to Washington, DC in March 2015 to present the preliminary results of the Alumni Study at the Comparative and International Education Society meeting, and this unit covered her expenses to travel to CIES in Vancouver in March 2016 to present the final results. Finally, several units across campus contributed to the tracking and tracing effort for the study. MSU's

registrar, Alumni Association and the African Studies Center provided a significant amount of information, and alumni representatives and faculty members from each college gave us updated data from their databases and contacts. We also coordinated with The MasterCard Foundation Scholars' Program office to identify alumni, update our databases, and increase response rate for data collection. Alumni, and Communications staff assisted with design of the survey invitation/newsletter.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

There has been significant interest in the outputs and outcomes of the African Alumni study across MSU. The database of African alumni that we created has already been useful for our faculty and students. The MSU MasterCard Foundation Scholars office has been able to use the data to get in touch with alumni and plans to utilize these alumni networks to connect students to internship and mentorship opportunities. Our MSU African Studies Center Director has also been able to use the database to build relationships with our alumni and has visited a few of them while travelling in Africa in February 2016. The alumni networks that will be reinvigorated through this work will have significant impact on MSU's future research, education and outreach goals in Africa. The results of the study will not only feed into program design for MSU's MasterCard Foundation Scholars' Program, but will also inform other academic programs at MSU. The need to make African students' degrees relevant to the African context, to allow African students opportunities to do relevant research, and to maintain alumni and faculty networks to not only enhance current students' education, but also to support alumni both on the continent and in the diaspora are key lessons that will influence future MSU activities.

DATA MANAGEMENT

The MSU Alumni Association maintains a centralized database with alumni names and contact information. The Registrar maintains a database with alumni graduation dates, degrees and majors. Both have different criteria for determining the nationality of alumni. The MSU research team gathered information from both entities and then cross-referenced the list of alumni, gleaning the appropriate information from each and combining them into one, more complete African alumni database. The team then undertook a significant tracking effort, connecting with faculty, colleges, and the African Studies Center, in addition to extensive internet searches, to verify the nationality of individuals, update their contact information, find out their current employment and position, and determine their current residence (in their country of origin, on the continent, or in the diaspora). The database is currently being kept by Dr. Jamison, the MSU PI, but a working version has been shared with The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program office and ISP Dean's office.

PARTNER: MCGILL UNIVERSITY

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

McGill participated in the survey working group, created the Canadian survey template and led the Canadian survey data collection through the use of CampusLabs software. Our research team investigated and presented the pros and cons of qualitative analysis software. Licenses for MAXQDA qualitative software were provided for Canadian partners by McGill University. In March 2015, McGill hosted a two-day research workshop with PIs from UC Berkeley, MSU and U of T. University Advancement provided the contact data of the alumni, and communications staff assisted with design of the survey invitation. The McGill research team conducted and transcribed the alumni interviews. Expertise from the McGill research team was provided for 1) the creation of the partner survey codebook;

2) the data analysis plan; and 3) compilation and data analysis of both the Canadian quantitative and qualitative data. McGill funded travel to Toronto in January 2016 for the data analysis and reporting of the Canadian quantitative data with the U of T PI.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

McGill was very interested in learning from past African alumni to inform services and programs for current students and the MasterCard scholars. Additional questions were added to the McGill online survey and interview template to investigate areas of interest, namely, the creation of social and in-person networks. Survey questions and reporting from this research project have informed other alumni surveys. We are in the process of planning the release of the McGill research results to our community.

DATA MANAGEMENT

McGill's University Advancement team devoted staff time and resources to supply the PIs with the latest information about our Sub-Saharan African alumni from 1985 to 2013.

PARTNER: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Several areas at U of T have been involved in the research project, providing information, time and resources in order to complete the survey and interview components of the research. Interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed by staff of the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program at U of T. Staff from U of T participated from the beginning stage of this research and worked on various committees such as the literature review committee and the qualitative research committee. Staff worked on writing the Canadian-specific piece which informs the final report for this project. U of T funded attendance for follow-up meetings regarding this research — for example, the meeting hosted by McGill University in March 2015.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

This research was undertaken as a part of the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program to see what learning would result that could assist in planning and thinking around the Scholars Program. We believe that a debriefing period after this project is necessary within the university so that findings can be further shared along with an analysis of the overall project, working across partners, and the results.

DATA MANAGEMENT

Alumni Relations and the use of other internal student databases provided listings of alumni which assisted in the different stages of data collection and interviewing.

APPENDIX A

PARTNER: SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Several individuals and units at SFU participated in this research because it crossed so many boundaries on campus: International Services for Students helped track down students; Institutional Research and Planning assisted with confirming graduates and convocation dates; Alumni Affairs provided some early leads to alumni; SFU International assisted with the survey and interview data collection; Student Affairs coordinated the project and provided monies for transcription of the interview data as well as overall project support, etc. We also required assistance from our Student Success team who facilitated the work we did with Campus Labs to ensure Canadian schools could participate within their Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act legal framework.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

As part of SFU's interviews, we added a bank of questions regarding their student experience specific to SFU and requested feedback and suggestion for enhancement. Several participants suggested the development of an African alumni network of sorts where alumni would serve as a resource for new graduates and current students. This is a great suggestion that will be further explored at the institution. This study also prompted a more general survey of new international graduates at SFU regarding student experience and next steps as well as a follow-up of close to 900 international "stop outs" to glean more information about their experiences and expectations. We hope to complete full profiles on each of the qualitative research participants and use them to celebrate their success. We have also begun discussion about connecting much more intentionally and earlier with our international student graduates so as to improve our alumni tracking systems.

DATA MANAGEMENT

It became clear early on that our alumni files were not very current and did not match our Institutional Research and Planning graduate data well. We employed a coordinator part time to set up networks on various social media to attempt to "find" many alumni from Africa for whom we had no current contact information. The Registrar and Director of Alumni relations are keen to explore new and better ways of staying connected with these graduates and new systems and protocols have been discussed to improve this area.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERS – MAKING SOCIAL CHANGE HAPPEN

SECTOR | HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH & SCIENCE

LEADERSHIP

University department chairs, deans, vice-chancellors, presidents

TRANSFORMATION

Saved dozens of neglected languages from extinction with Language Atlas of Tanzania; raised provincial university to first-class quality with "returnee" faculty; founded liberal arts university in Ghana and was awarded a MacArthur fellowship for contribution to higher education in Africa.

"We only had Master's in Public Health, now we have master's programs with various specialty areas, and the new PhD program. I started four or five other public health departments in other universities in Ethiopia, some with PhDs."

SECTOR | PRIVATE BUSINESS & SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

LEADERSHIP

Founders, CEOs and senior managers of industries, innovators of new technologies, leaders of corporate responsibility programs

TRANSFORMATION

Real estate financing to extend housing to hundreds of low- and middle-class families; solar energy penetration to small rural villages throughout Kenya; breaking tea factory monopsony to increase prices for thousands of farmers; creating upwardly mobile jobs for thousands; co-founded African Center for Corporate Governance.

"My biggest achievement was bringing Western Union to Ghana and then 14 countries in Africa. It helped create thousands of jobs in Africa. Western Union was needed in Africa to help channel remittances easily to end users. I also developed my own Ag Development Bank."

APPENDIX B

SECTOR | CREATIVE ARTS

LEADERSHIP

Prize-winning and path-setting authors, architects, designers, musicians, supporters of creative arts in Africa

TRANSFORMATION

Unleashed new literary talent as judge for Etisalat Pan-African Prize for Literature; designed museum to honour Nelson Mandela; developed "Art of Creative Thinking" to open the minds of hundreds of vocational training students in Kenya.

"One thing that I found from the Art of Creative Thinking is that the little playful different ways of exchanging and writing — after a while they started opening up. Let me put it this way — a lightness of dealing with deep things. There is a bonding and understanding, and a crossing of cultures."

SECTOR | GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SERVICE

LEADERSHIP

Ministers of national governments, directors and chairpersons of national government agencies, key advisors to heads of state

TRANSFORMATION

Negotiated peace with Lord's Resistance Army in 2009; changed public sector hiring through creating "meritocracy;" advised Moi on multi-party democratic transition; organized Liberian market women to elect first female president in Africa.

"I had two or three meetings with Joseph Kony who has committed untold crimes against humanity, but whom Uganda was ready to bring home and ensure that he goes through accountability mechanisms that would make sure that justice is established. ... So, this did us a lot of good, and since then there have not been any bullets fired by rebel groups in northern Uganda."

APPENDIX B

SECTOR | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LEADERSHIP

Leadersofcommunity-based,non-profitandphilanthropic organizations serving disadvantaged communities.

TRANSFORMATION

Launched Slum and Shack Dwellers International serving more than three million "slum" families globally; led campaign for residential, independent living for the mentally disabled in South Africa; developed community-based HIV prevention program saving thousands of lives; started demonstration farm and rural school serving 460 students; strengthened indigenous institutions to provide community-based health insurance serving rural Ethiopia.

"Now, we have an operating system that is more sophisticated, to address problems of land tenure, infrastructure development, housing, advocacy and exclusion, livelihoods. The programs are all accessible through an operating system, which is savings, and women-driven savings. That is what gives SDI [Slum/ Shack Dwellers International] a much more organizationally sustainable dimension."

SECTOR | PAN-AFRICAN POLICY & LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP

African policy leaders in the United Nations and World Bank, founders of pan-African leadership institutions and think tanks

TRANSFORMATION

Developed social policy on education for Africa; facilitated the ICT revolution for Africa; led integration of social safety nets into WFP emergency relief for Africa; founder of policy think tank to advise governments on 21st century "economic transformation of Africa."

"No, I was a pan-Africanist. The work I did at the bank was to help Uganda, Kenya and Zambia. The reforms that I had influence on were put in place. Ghana gave me an opportunity, but I paid back to Africa."

"The demand was so great, that we decided to put a centre in South Africa, and one in East Africa. The Institute for Social Transformation promotes training for transformation. Creating critical consciousness, mindset change of Africans, new leadership."

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