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Scholars Program

THE IMPRINT OF EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT ON GIVE-BACK

June 2022

This Spotlight report series summarizes the preliminary findings from *The Imprint of Education*, a five-year longitudinal cohort study of African alumni of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program (from selected countries and cohorts) carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council. The findings presented here should be interpreted as a reflection of what has been found so far and is a work in progress. It is important to interpret these findings not as representative of the whole Scholar population, but rather of the specific study population.

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is a network of universities and non-governmental organizations with a commitment to inclusive and relevant education. The Program provides young African leaders, especially those from under-resourced communities, with the knowledge and skills they need to transition into dignified and fulfilling livelihoods and contribute to the social and economic transformation of the African continent. A key outcome of the Scholars Program is to develop a

cohort of socially conscious, transformative leaders who both can and want to make a difference in their worlds. The Scholars Program seeks to make this a reality for secondary and tertiary students from marginalized communities whose academic talent exceeds their financial resources. By asking alumni to make their education count not only for themselves, but also to benefit their communities and wider society, the Scholars Program aims to develop a new generation of African leaders.

KEY STATISTICS

82% of tertiary institution alumni give money to their families.	63% of secondary school alumni assist their families with household chores.	55% of tertiary alumni are internally motivated to give.
51% of secondary alumni are motivated to give based on what they learned from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program.	Almost all alumni feel they are responsible for having a positive impact in their communities.	Over ¾ of both tertiary and secondary alumni feel they contribute to making the world a better place “somewhat” or “to a great extent”.

THE NOTION OF GIVE-BACK

The Mastercard Foundation’s understanding of the notion of ‘give-back’ is of a long-term and non-linear practice, in line with a globalized economy where people are increasingly mobile, and norms are in flux. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program acknowledges that Scholars and alumni may be navigating multiple responsibilities in several spheres and therefore how they conceive of give-back may change over time. The Imprint of Education longitudinal cohort study aims to better understand the individual, structural, contextual, and programmatic factors that influence alumni decision-making regarding give-back and the

contributions they are making to their families, communities, organizations, and societies. This report summarizes the preliminary findings from two years of data collection. In 2020, data provided an initial impression of how alumni understand give-back, how and to whom they give, and the broad factors that influence giving. With more than three quarters of alumni engaged in meaningful ways of giving back, 2021 focused on tertiary alumni’s motivations for give-back and how they measure the impact of their give-back activities, including the extent to which alumni felt they had made the world a better place.

TYPES OF GIVING

Commonly understood as voluntary acts of community service, give-back contributions can be monetary, professional, or an individual may volunteer their time, expertise, connections, or other forms of social capital. In the Alumni Tracer Study survey, participants were asked about the kind of help they give to their families (Table 1). For younger secondary school alumni, household chores garnered the most responses, followed by emotional support, while financial support of siblings had the lowest response after

not providing any help. This is expected as these are recent secondary school graduates (with an average age of 21 in 2020), many of whom still live at home and have yet to complete higher education or establish themselves in their careers. In contrast, among the tertiary institution alumni, those who had already completed undergraduate or graduate degrees and with an average age of 27 in 2020, financial support and giving material goods to family had the highest responses.

Table 1: Types of help given by alumni to their families

Type of Help	Secondary N=8,650	Tertiary n=413
Money / financial	23%	82%
Time	30%	46%
Material goods (food, clothes, furniture, etc.)	22%	57%
Skills / expertise	12%	36%
Household chores	63%	33%
Funding siblings' education	6%	40%
Emotional support	35%	48%
None	2%	0%

Source: 2020 Alumni Tracer Study wave 1 dataset

Alumni were also asked about the help that they give the broader community (Table 2). Mentoring was the main way in which tertiary alumni give back: through offering advice and supporting

transitions into university. For secondary school alumni, volunteering or charity work, mentoring, and giving time were the most cited activities.

Table 2: Types of help given by alumni to their communities

Type of Help	Secondary N=8,650	Tertiary n=413
Money / financial	2%	21%
Time	19%	33%
Material goods	3%	14%
Skills / expertise	11%	41%
Mentoring	29%	62%
Volunteering or charity work	71%	57%
I create jobs	1%	12%

Source: 2020 Alumni Tracer Study wave 1 dataset

In 2020 interviews, alumni spoke of how, in some instances, informal mentorship progressed into projects. Among examples shared was a recurring intervention to support secondary school learners with career guidance. Sectors identified for give-back interventions included health, agriculture, cultural and creative industries, and digital technologies. Food

nutrition, social justice, and disability advocacy also featured as areas for give-back efforts. Interviews with alumni in 2021 saw similar kinds of engagements with a notable shift toward more sexual and reproductive health, environmental, and COVID-19 related give-back initiatives.

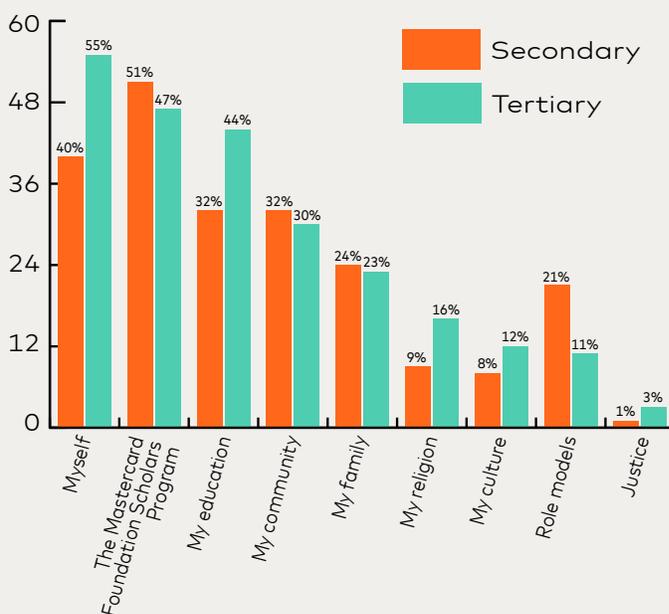
REASONS FOR GIVING

It was found that alumni have a strong inclination toward giving back driven by innate understandings that it is “the African way” and an example of Ubuntu (an African ethic of shared humanity). Other motivations included being encouraged to do so by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, and a sense of personal obligation to their families and broader community. Religious and cultural values also played a significant role for some alumni.

Interviews in 2021 focused in greater depth on tertiary alumni’s motivations for give-back and found that there were several intrinsic motivators, supplemented by extrinsic factors. For example, being on the receiving end of family and community sacrifices and wanting to ensure a ‘ripple effect’ impact on others:

I never thought that a little girl from Biriwa will now be going to do her PhD. My humble background and how far I’ve come kind of gives me a sense of giving back. Making sure that I’m not only rising, but carrying people along. (Participant 5, female, age 25, Diaspora, 2017 Scholar)

Figure 1: Motivation for helping community (N=5,078 secondary school alumni, n=274 tertiary institution alumni)
Source: 2020 Alumni Tracer Study wave 1 dataset



Giving was significantly inspired by a sense of social responsibility and personal fulfilment, with almost all alumni affirming their social responsibility to the community (Table 3).

Table 3: Level of agreement with the statement “I am responsible for doing something in my community”

Level of Agreement	Secondary N=8,650	Tertiary n=413
Strongly agree	38%	51%
Agree	59%	47%
Disagree	3%	2%
Strongly disagree	0.4%	0.5%

Source: 2020 Alumni Tracer Study wave 1 dataset

What has emerged from the study so far is that alumni see give-back as having a social ripple effect that can aid in the societal development of families, communities, and countries. With that goal, the 2021 Alumni Tracer Study survey posed the following question: "In your opinion, how much

have you been able to make the world a better place in this past year?" While the differences between answers given by secondary and tertiary alumni were not vast, tertiary alumni did answer "to a great extent" in larger proportion to secondary alumni (Table 4).

Table 4: Extent to which alumni feel they have made the world a better place

Extent to which alumni feel they have made the world a better place	Secondary N=8,381	Tertiary n=602
To a great extent	24%	27%
Somewhat	50%	53%
Very little	22%	17%
Not at all	4%	3%

Source: 2021 Alumni Tracer Study wave 2 dataset

Alumni expressed an overwhelming desire to continue to give back in future and in greater ways. In 2020, professional mentorship and improved collaborative networks were presented as recommendations to better support alumni's give-back efforts. Whereas in 2021, tertiary

alumni were already beginning to work more collaboratively on their projects, and while many were not yet engaged in give-back projects that operate at a systemic level as opposed to an individual one, just under half had such projects in their sights for the future.

BARRIERS TO GIVING

Over the two years of research, barriers to give-back have included lack of finances, lack of time, and the absence of a viable support network. Some of these challenges differed slightly between tertiary alumni and secondary alumni, with a lack of opportunity being key for secondary alumni and a lack of time for tertiary alumni. A

lack of money to do the giving they would like to do was an issue for both groups. In 2021, findings indicated that tertiary alumni remained committed to giving back in greater ways despite ongoing constraints, including limited networks and finances, and the wide-ranging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

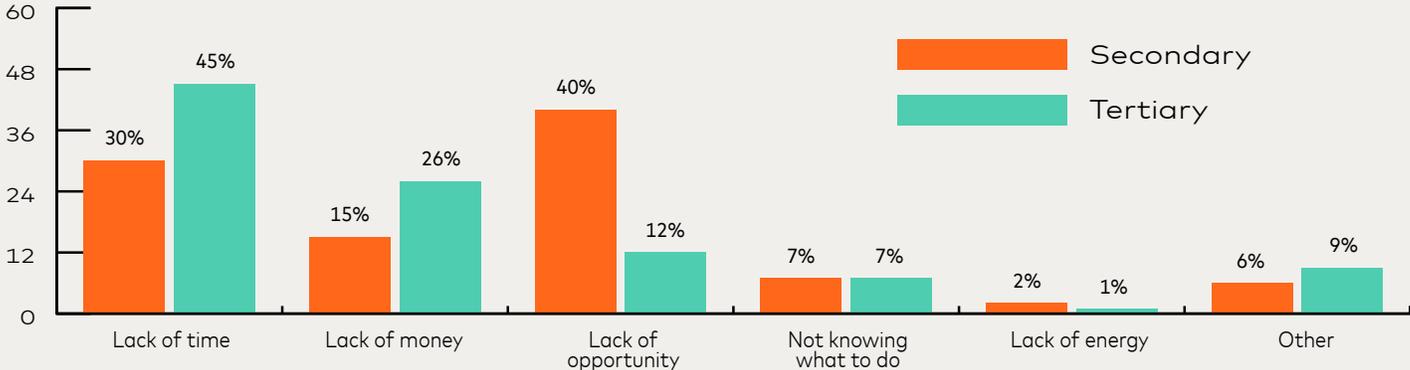
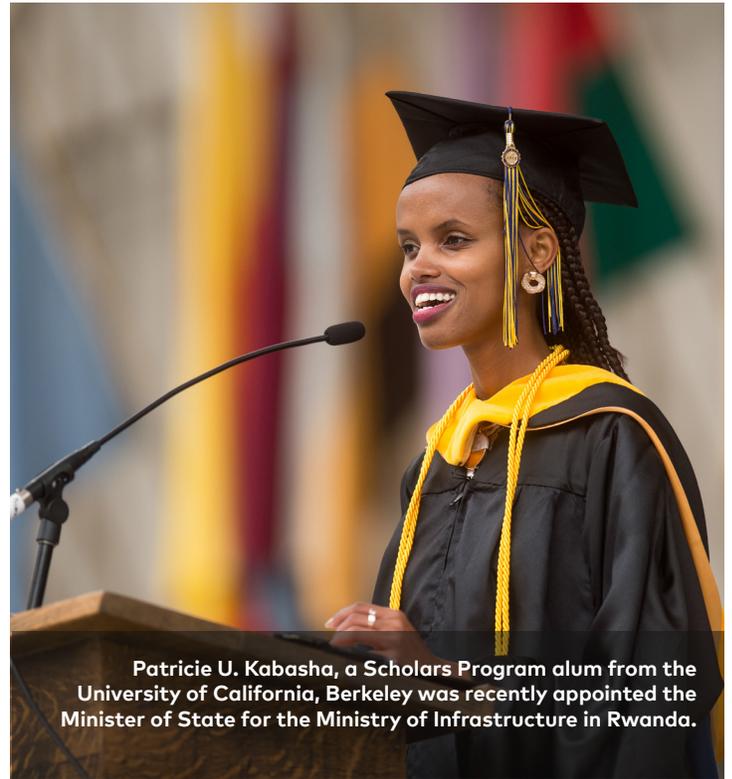


Figure 2: Reasons for non-involvement in community service (N=3,572 secondary school alumni, n=139 tertiary institution alumni) Source: 2020 Alumni Tracer Study wave 1 dataset

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Alumni demonstrate that giving back, when it is done, is an incremental and continual process. In their responses it is evident that alumni view give-back as a tangible component of transformative leadership that is invaluable in building their values, passions, and causes, as well as networks, particularly with local communities. As they progress into establishing and working with more complex and diverse groups and organizations, alumni can see first-hand the way that these leadership values can successfully support change at a variety of levels in society, as well as the kinds of dispositions and boundaries that they may need to develop in order to balance their personal and societal aspirations. For now though, their influence remains limited for the most part to their immediate spheres of influence: family, friends, and local communities.



Patricie U. Kabasha, a Scholars Program alum from the University of California, Berkeley was recently appointed the Minister of State for the Ministry of Infrastructure in Rwanda.

Credit: Noah Berger



Scholars Program alum Jimmy Kalama.

Credit: Mastercard Foundation

DIGGING DEEPER IN NEXT ROUNDS OF RESEARCH

In future rounds of data collection, further attention will be given to understanding the additional support and skills alumni require to undertake impactful give-back initiatives more effectively, and to widen their spheres of influence. For many alumni, the impacts their give-back initiatives are making have been challenging to articulate and measure. To date, most clear impact indicators came from workplace-related projects, informal efforts, or did not exist at all. For that reason, more work needs to be done to appreciate the difference alumni are making through their give-back efforts. Greater attention will be paid to how alumni's current give-back projects might develop from helping individuals, to something that changes unjust systems. Also on the 2022 agenda is a discussion with alumni about the personal costs of giving back i.e., learning to navigate balancing their sense of social responsibility with their own personal needs.

NOTES ON THE STUDY

The Imprint of Education longitudinal cohort study has a number of goals, one of which is to understand how Scholars Program alumni understand and practice entrepreneurship, using data gathered from three sources. The first is through a quantitative survey of alumni of both the secondary school and tertiary institution Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program from Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Uganda who completed their studies between 2017 and 2020. Also included were tertiary scholars who studied abroad. A total of 1289 secondary school alumni (weighted to the population of 8,650 and represented by N) and 413 tertiary institution alumni (of a possible 839 for which records were available, represented by n) participated in the first round of the survey in 2020. In 2021 these same alumni were contacted

to confirm details and update some questions regarding their current pathways (N=8,381, and n=602). The second source of data comprises qualitative in-depth interviews conducted in 2020 and 2021 with 122 tertiary institution scholars who graduated between 2014 and 2020 with undergraduate or graduate degrees and who were recipients of Mastercard Foundation scholarships. These participants were drawn from the same six countries as is the case for the quantitative component of the study, as well as from those who studied abroad at partner institutions from anywhere on the continent (a group the study calls 'the Diaspora'). The third source of data was obtained through qualitative interviews with key informants from institutions and organizations that implemented the Scholars Program conducted in 2020.

THIS SPOTLIGHT PUBLICATION IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING REPORTS:

Mahali, A., Swartz, S., Juan, A. and The Imprint of Education Research Team. The Imprint of Education Study: A Longitudinal Cohort Study of African Alumni of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program – Year 1 Research Report. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 2021.

Swartz, S., Mahali, A., Juan, A., and The Imprint of Education Research Team. The Imprint of Education Study: A Longitudinal Cohort Study of African Alumni of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program – Year 2 Research Report. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 2022.