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**Interpreting the Impact of a Professional Development Program: Views of Entrepreneur Fellows from Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda One Year Later**

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**Abstract**

*We conducted a qualitative study that examined the experiences of entrepreneurs who participated in a five-week-long professional development and cultural exchange fellowship program. The Entrepreneur Fellows represented three Sub-Saharan African nations and an array of enterprises, including agriculture and its allied fields, youth development organizations, and social ventures. The study assessed the post-fellowship experiences of the participants, especially regarding their enterprise-related goals, motivations and challenges, community-level impacts, as well as networking and communication practices. Analysis of data derived from 11 semi-structured interviews revealed three overarching themes and nine subthemes. The Entrepreneur Fellows were committed to life-long learning and sharing information, gained new business skills, and expanded their global networks. The Fellows valued their program participation and viewed it as a mark of success. Further, participants were motivated not only by the growth of their enterprises, but also the potential to positively impact their communities. Our findings imply the need for multi-year, longitudinal research, including economic impact data from the Fellows' enterprises. We also recommend that similar programming be supported and delivered in the future.*

**Keywords:** enterprise development; entrepreneurship; fellowships; Sub-Saharan Africa

### Introduction/Review of Literature

In 2015, the United Nations released its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with special focus on the alleviation of poverty worldwide (United Nations, n.d.). The United Nations, as a tool to measure poverty at the outset of the SDGs, also developed the *2015 Human Development Report: Work for Human Development* (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). This report provided the Human Development Index (HDI) to evaluate “long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living” (United Nations Development Programme, 2015, p. 3). Many nations with the lowest HDI scores are in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). For instance, Kenya and Uganda were classified as “low human development,” and South Africa was listed as a “medium human development” nation (United Nations Development Programme, 2015, pp. 49 & 209).

Regarding economic development, “[t]raining, or capacity building, is just as important as infrastructure. Appropriate levels of higher and technical education allow entrepreneurs to use existing technologies in new ways to address local problems” (Juma, 2011, p. 11). Moreover, micro, small, and medium size enterprises are integral parts of the economy, especially throughout the developing world (International Finance Corporation, n.d.) and accounted for up to 90% of businesses and 50% of employment worldwide in 2012.

To strengthen the human capital of SSA entrepreneurs, the U.S. Department of State funded a grant project proposed and delivered by faculty members of Oklahoma State University. This project brought 23 Entrepreneur Fellows from Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda (see Figure 1) to the United States for a professional development fellowship program. Most of the Fellows had agricultural or related rural development ventures. While in the United States during either 2014 or 2015, the Fellows engaged in entrepreneurial training, short-term internships/job shadowing placements for three weeks of the four-week-long portion of the program held in Oklahoma, including entrepreneurial mentoring, and a variety of cultural experiences (Bragoli, 2016; Taylor et al., 2020). The fifth week of the fellowship program was spent at a conference in Washington, DC with participants of similar programs that had occurred simultaneously.

### Problem Statement

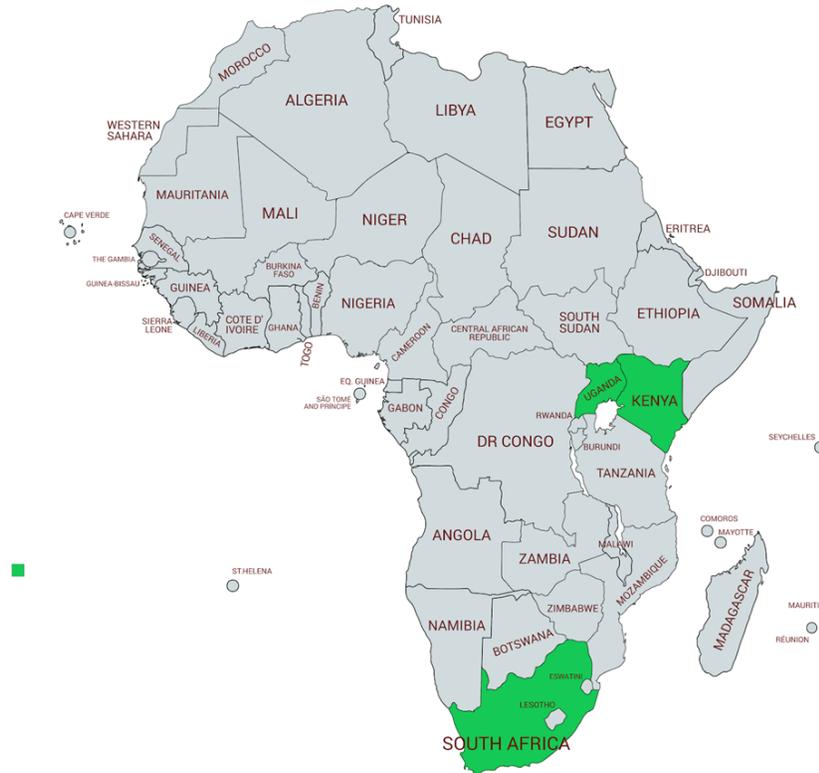
A lack of knowledge existed about the Entrepreneur Fellows’ views on the fellowship’s impact after returning home, especially regarding their business enterprises and social ventures. This was the rationale for conducting a follow up study that provided qualitative data for analysis and reporting.

### Conceptual and Theoretical Lenses

We conceptualized our study using the lens of human capital theory (HCT). According to Salamon (1991), “the skills, knowledge, and abilities of human beings” (p. 3) is known as *human capital*. Becker (1962) noted that human capital is linked to “activities that influence future real income through the imbedding of resources in people” (p. 9). Becker (1993) also posited that the impact of human capital can extend outside an individual’s professional life. He stated: “. . . investing or disinvesting in human capital often alters the very nature of a person: training may change a life-style from one with perennial unemployment to one with stable and good earnings. . .” (p. 392). Further, the economic benefits of investing in human capital have the potential to permeate a society (Sweetland, 1996).

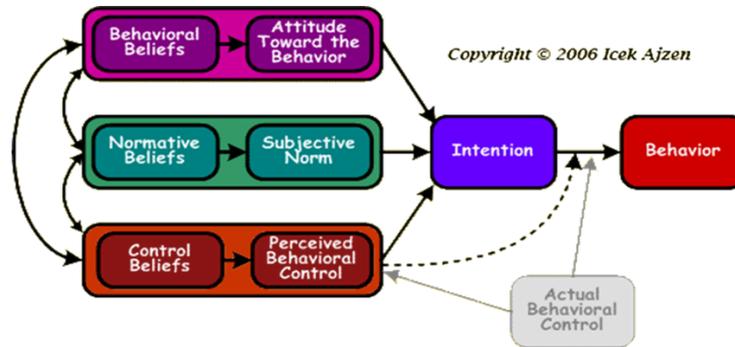
**Figure 1**

Map of Africa with the Entrepreneur Fellows' Home Nations Highlighted: Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda



**Figure 2**

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior



The theoretical lens through which we interpreted our findings was Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) [see Figure 2]. TPB posits that human behaviors, or intentions to act, are informed by three factors: attitudes toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Ajzen (1991) asserted that an individual's perceptions and attitudes surrounding a behavior may be affected by a behavioral intervention. The fellowship experience served as both an investment in the human capital of and a behavioral intervention for the participating entrepreneurs.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

This qualitative study's purpose was to explore the experiences of select Entrepreneur Fellows regarding their business and social venturing enterprises approximately one year after participating in an entrepreneurship development program in the United States. The inquiry sought to identify themes expressed by the entrepreneurs about how participation in the fellowship program impacted their enterprises after returning home. This study was guided by four research questions: 1. What were the Entrepreneur Fellows' views regarding the fellowship program's impact on their enterprises after returning home? 2. What were the enterprise-related motivations, challenges, and accomplishments of the Entrepreneur Fellows? 3. In what ways had the Entrepreneur Fellows' enterprises impacted their communities? 4. What were the communication and networking practices of the Entrepreneur Fellows?

### **Methods**

We employed a qualitative inquiry approach to create case studies which would "... provide detailed description of the themes within each case, followed by thematic analysis across cases" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 31), i.e., our study's participants. The cases were used "to discover important patterns and themes" (Patton, 2015, p. 13). According to Stake (2006), this approach is used "to study the experience of real cases operating in real situations" (p. 3).

Of the 23 Entrepreneur Fellows, 11 were purposefully selected to take part in the research study (see Table 1). The Fellows selected were chosen using criterion-based sampling because it "works well when all the individuals studied experienced the same phenomenon" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). Participants were chosen based on five criteria: select members of both cohorts, i.e., Fall and Spring; females and males would be interviewed; all three participant countries, Kenya, South Africa, and Uganda, were represented; a variety of entrepreneurial enterprises were part of the sample by including owners of farms, agro-input suppliers, educators, and social entrepreneurs in the group interviewed; different levels of socioeconomic status were also taken into account when selecting the Entrepreneur Fellows to interview. The interviewees included four women and seven men, i.e., four Kenyans, three South Africans, and four Ugandans (see Table 1). Altogether these individuals had enterprises in agricultural media, agro-inputs and mechanics, production agriculture, retail food sales, social ventures, and textile design and manufacture.

From October 2015 to May 2016, the lead researcher conducted the study's semi-structured interviews. These interviews were guided by 14 open-ended questions (Bragoli, 2016) which prompted the respondents to answer specific, predetermined items but also allowed space for spontaneous anecdotes or descriptions to be shared (Brinkmann, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The questions were reviewed and critiqued by a panel of experts at Oklahoma State University, including an agricultural educator, an agricultural economist, and an entrepreneurship educator, to ensure face and content validity. The 45 to 60-minute interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and returned to the interview participants for clarifications or corrections, i.e., member checking occurred (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

During data analysis, the lead researcher identified specific codes which were "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4) from each case. We initially employed open coding and memo writing to reveal theoretical leads within the data. Next, to better understand the linkages and differences revealed by the initial coding processes, we applied axial and theoretical coding by using NVivo 11 Pro, a qualitative

data analysis software, to explicate connections between data, themes and subthemes, and the study's conceptual and theoretical lenses.

**Table 1**

*Summary of Study Participants by Country, Gender, and Project Phase (N = 11)*

<b>Participant Pseudo Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Project Phase (Spring or Fall)</b>
Matthew	Kenya	Male	Fall
Charlotte	Kenya	Female	Spring
Nicholas	Kenya	Male	Spring
Roger	Kenya	Male	Fall
Nancy	South Africa	Female	Fall
Penelope	South Africa	Female	Fall
Malcolm	South Africa	Male	Spring
Martin	Uganda	Male	Spring
Jacob	Uganda	Male	Spring
Simon	Uganda	Male	Spring
Cara	Uganda	Female	Fall

According to Tracy (2010), high quality research is distinguished by factors such as rich rigor, ethics, sincerity, and credibility. To ensure the study's credibility, the lead researcher engaged in reflexivity by disclosing her related assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes surrounding the phenomenon investigated and bracketing such to reduce the potential for bias (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher was raised in an agricultural community of northern California. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural business with a minor in international relations from California Polytechnic State University. After her undergraduate studies, she pursued a Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University. The other researchers were full-time faculty members at the lead researcher's university who represented agricultural education, agricultural economics, and entrepreneurship. All had traveled to SSA to work with entrepreneurs in the agriculture and food sectors and had taught and mentored graduate students from that region.

The criteria outlined by Tracy (2010), along with data triangulation, assisted in gleaning transparent and meaningful findings. The analysis of 11 interview transcripts yielded 35 codes, three overarching themes, and nine underlying subthemes. We interrogated and derived the meaning of such using the lenses of human capital theory [HCT] (Becker, 1962; Salamon, 1991) and Ajzen's (1991) TPB (see Figure 2), the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks, respectively. Interpreting our findings through these lenses revealed the impact of the human capital investments made in the Entrepreneur Fellows, including their perceived changes in attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Ajzen, 1991) approximately one year after the fellowship experience had occurred.

## Results

**Research Question #1: The themes *impact of the fellowship and the entrepreneurial spirit* and the related subthemes of *new global network and seeking and sharing information***

While in the United States, the Entrepreneur Fellows were exposed to new information, gained new skills, and expanded their professional and social networks. During their interviews, they discussed leveraging newly formed connections and adopting new practices. Martin, a Ugandan agro-inputs dealer who worked with smallholder farmers stated: “[M]ost of the entrepreneurs from the U.S., team Uganda, we are still together. I can always call on them. We compare notes and see how far we are going. And we recently met [online] last week.” Matthew, a Kenyan dairyman, said of his mentor at Oklahoma State University: “I really appreciate what he was able to do for me. . . . I learnt a lot and that even compelled me to even want to succeed even further.” The Fellows also noted successfully implementing new business practices learned during the fellowship. Martin shared: “. . . the growth has been a rapid growth. This is because I have been implementing things I was not using before.” Further, Roger, a Kenyan agricultural engineer, said: “I have applied about 99% of what I learned in the U.S. . . . [and] I am pulling more people to come to my business, because they are seeing a different or a new product or way of operating in our business.”

In addition to technical information and knowledge, the Fellows were exposed to the benefits of collaborative relationships. Charlotte, a pork supply chain manager, discussed this as applied to her enterprise. She stated: “. . . what I did get was the idea that, ‘wow, I don’t have to have everything on my own. I just probably need to partner with the right people and get moving from there.’” This contact with a new, diverse network of entrepreneurs was of great benefit to the Fellows. Penelope, a South African Fellow, also described her experience with the network. She noted: “I was given the opportunity to meet with other African Fellows and be exposed to what other young people are doing around the world.” Through the fellowship, the entrepreneurs described gaining new knowledge, skills, and contacts that enhanced their businesses.

**Research Question #2: The themes *impact of the fellowship, interpersonal connections, and the entrepreneurial spirit, and the related subthemes of growth and goal-oriented, community engagement, seeking and sharing information, accessing capital, and Oklahoma State University as a measure of success***

Several motivating forces were revealed that impacted the Entrepreneur Fellows’ actions regarding their enterprises after returning home. This included job creation, desires to meet business-related needs, capacity building for themselves and others, opportunity recognition, and strengthening their communities. As such, the fellowship program was a direct investment in the human capital (Becker, 1993; Sweetland, 1996) of its participants. This investment resulted in growth of the Fellows’ enterprises and the employment of not only themselves but also other members of their communities. These economic impacts, such as reducing unemployment and increases in revenue experienced by the Fellows as related to participating in the fellowship program, align with the Becker’s (1962, 1993) and Sweetland’s (1996) assertions that individuals *and* communities derive benefits from investments in human capital.

As for starting his own business in South Africa, Malcolm stated: “the idea behind that was really to focus on development agriculture, because South Africa is actually a very commercially driven and focused agricultural sector. And I felt that small farmers are left out of the equation.”

The opportunity to empower underrepresented populations served as a driving force behind several of the Fellows’ business ventures regardless of their status as social enterprises. Nancy, through her farm, which is a traditional for-profit venture, also sought to deliver learning and economic development opportunities to youth and smallholder farmers in her community.

She discussed this aim: “We’re going to have quite a big rabbit production that will employ a lot of youth and also assist smallholder farmers to have their own youth projects.” As such, the entrepreneurs emphasized *community engagement* through the operation of their enterprises.

During his interview, Jacob, a Ugandan agriculturist, discussed the Entrepreneur Fellows-founded organization Global Partnership for African Youth in Agriculture [GLO-PAYA] (see Figure 3). Having originated from the Fellows’ desires to promote the agricultural sector to youth in their communities, GLO-PAYA seeks to “turn that perspective of the youth [about agriculture]. We want to turn it from agriculture is dirty to, you know, it needs a lot of strength, and it is good.”

**Figure 3**

*GLO-PAYA’s Facebook Page at the Time of the Study (Bragoli, 2016)*



Jacob continued:

Our engagements will be focused on turning the attitudes of the youth towards the [agriculture] sector. When they learn about it, they will appreciate it much more. And they will gain from it and see that there are jobs for them in the sector.

The focus on engaging future generations was a priority of many of the Entrepreneur Fellows, including those not specifically conducting social ventures. Nicholas, a Kenyan Fellow, discussed his aspirations to start a foundation to train and empower at risk youth in his community. He said:

So that foundation [which Nicholas aimed to launch with profits from his business] will not only rehabilitate them [youth], but it will give them life skills. They will be able to

stand on their own feet. They will be able to start their own projects and actually be able to be self-sufficient.

Cara, a Ugandan gender equity specialist in the coffee industry, working to promote smallholder farmers and their contributions to the Ugandan coffee market, noted: “We are also trying to promote the youth. We have youth that have come up with their own enterprises, like coffee liquors and other items. So, we sell those for them.” The desire to support, develop, and empower, i.e., *engage with their communities*, was a core motivation conveyed by the Fellows, especially regarding youth.

Those interviewed also expressed *a deep desire for new information and the opportunity to share that with their peers, colleagues, and communities*. Malcolm, a South African who specializes in agricultural communications, founded his business “to do something for [smallholder farmers], [to] at least create something that can in a more sustainable way disseminate information and create content, all those kinds of things.” And Roger, after having been laid off by his employer, noted an opportunity to serve small- and medium-scale farmers in his area through opening his own equipment fabrication shop. He explained:

They [local farmers] didn’t have anyone to assist them in carrying out making their implements, showing them what to do, how to go about [using such]. And because I had done much in the workshop in the company, I had a lot of experience. Plus, because of that experience I had trained for, I was better placed to assist the farmers. That is what made me move in that direction.

Matthew also addressed the impact of access to information on small farmers and local economies. He shared: “[T]hese are people who, if well taught and well trained, and given information, they can really, really change their lives through those small farms.” Matthew said of his home country, Kenya: “[W]e have the land, but information is lacking, we don’t have the machinery. So, I thought I could act as a bridge and to bridge that gap that is missing.”

Regardless of scale, industry, or nation, a main challenge faced by the Entrepreneur Fellows was *accessing capital*. Nancy, a farmer and rancher from South Africa, left her job with a financial firm to manage her family’s agribusiness. Though the company is well-established and registered to receive government support, Nancy expressed a continuing need for increased cash flows:

So, the challenge that we still face is the management of cash flow. Understanding that, we can’t sell every month, the beef cattle. . . . But, things like our salaries have to be paid every month. It doesn’t matter if what other expenses we’ve got. So, juggling those expenses is probably my biggest issue.

Malcom had also left his salaried position to pursue his enterprise full-time. However, due to financial constraints he had shifted from his original plan. At the outset of launching his business, Malcolm planned to produce regular publications and materials geared toward farmers. But he soon realized “. . . that was a very costly route and was going to need a lot of financial muscle and support. So, what I’m doing is, I’m providing information or complementary content for existing publications.”

Charlotte also voiced the need for more capital. Even though the quality of the pork she brings to market is high, she is still unable to afford Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points certification. Charlotte expressed her frustration: “. . . while I know I qualify for everything in terms of standards, I can’t pay for that license. It’s about \$2000 annually. So that’s too much for a small-scale person. Yet, you know your product is good.”

In addition, the participants regarded their status as Entrepreneur Fellows as a *major*

*achievement or mark of success.* Martin, who wore a shirt from the Oklahoma State University during his interview, shared:

. . . my greatest achievement, I must say, was when I was invited to the U.S. and the African entrepreneurship program. That was the biggest achievement because it was a very big opportunity. . . . [t]he people who applied—there were so many. . . but because of my entrepreneurship skills and my innovation, I was selected . . . [to] participate . . .

And Malcolm expressed that participation in the fellowship program bolstered the credibility of his enterprise. He said: “I feel comfortable presenting my case to [potential clients] precisely because of the entrepreneur fellowship, which I think was a very good foundation to give credibility to what I’ve always wanted to do.”

### **Research Question #3: The themes *interpersonal connections and impact of the fellowship and the related subthemes of community engagement and creation of a youth development organization***

After returning home from the fellowship, the entrepreneurs had served as sources of information, training, employment, and leadership in their communities. A primary motivating factor some of the Entrepreneur Fellows expressed was the opportunity for additional *community engagement* after their return. As a result, the Fellows’ enterprises lifted not only their own households but also the livelihoods of community members in their home countries. Martin’s enterprise, which markets appropriately scaled agricultural inputs to previously underserved farmers in Uganda, supplies about 45 farmers a day. Further, Martin also provides training to his clients “. . . [and] goes to farmers directly to show what does work and what doesn’t work.” Charlotte’s enterprise had also impacted small-scale pork producers in her area. In addition to the training she provided, Charlotte described the progress made by the producers with whom she worked: “. . . they will get market access through me because I have contacts who would be interested to buy from me because of my expertise. So, they are sure of my standards.” And Roger expressed pride in the training his enterprise was providing. He said: “. . . we are giving training to the college students on lots of farm equipment. Because we train the college students who come to the business and we train them after that period of internship programs in the shop.”

After returning from the United States and establishing her team, Penelope’s organization provided mentorship and coaching “for a group of about 40 teen girls that [they] work with on a regular basis.” Along with emotional support, Penelope’s group facilitates capacity development which she described: “[W]hether that be spending time teaching them the basics of computer, how to compile a CV, for example, or how to knit, or how to conduct an interview.”

Another way in which the Fellows had impacted their communities was through *creation of a youth development organization*. Jacob, a Ugandan entrepreneur, described the initiative: “[F]ollowing our engagement in the fellowship, we started something called GLO-PAYA—the Global Partnership for African Youth in Agriculture.” GLO-PAYA (see Figure 3), which was modeled after 4-H, aims to engage youth through agricultural programming and the Entrepreneur Fellows’ shared vision to change the perceptions of African youth about agriculture and its allied sectors. At the time of this study, GLO-PAYA had been formally registered in two of the three participant nations. Jacob noted that registering with each government was very important “[b]ecause once we have the structures off the ground and once we are legally existing, then we can be pushed to do things.”

**Research Question #4: The themes *interpersonal connections* and *impact of the fellowship* and the related subthemes of *importance of relationships*, *networking and communication*, and *new global network***

The Entrepreneur Fellows valued open and consistent communication, transparency, and collaboration among themselves and with their contacts made during the fellowship, and regarding colleagues and employees. The Fellows engaged in social media, networking events, and described leveraging the new network created by the fellowship program. Paramount to the Fellows' enterprises were their connections with family, friends, clients/customers, neighbors, mentors, and colleagues. These relationships were permeated with social capital, including investments in and returns from such.

Cara stressed the importance of forming relationships with her customers at the coffee shop: “. . . our customers . . . are the middle-income earners, and the emerging youth in Kampala. . . but they are also our friends. They are returning customers. We know them. When he or she comes, we know what they are going to order.” Many of the Fellows described family members and teachers who influenced them as well as mentors with whom they interacted during their stay in the United States and afterward. During his interview, Martin indicated that he could always reach out to individuals who mentored him during the fellowship. He stated: “They have been so useful to me. It is even like we are with each other every now and then. We are so close to each other.”

After returning from the United States, Charlotte said she had engaged in networking via trade shows. She stated: “[w]hen there is a special group that I feel would benefit from knowing me, then I attend such trade fairs as an exhibitor. . . . So, for me that's something that I didn't really conceptualize from the start.” In addition, Nancy described membership in several professional organizations and relying on a local fruit and vegetable packing house that buys and markets her produce for industry information and connections to other growers. Nancy noted that through these channels she has “. . . been able to get in touch with the other producers. They put together courses for the producers. . . . the communication with the pack[ing] house is really, really active.” After the fellowship, the entrepreneurs described being a part of new and broader networks that were benefitting their enterprises.

**Conclusions, Implications, and Discussion**

Comprised of three subthemes, the theme *interpersonal connections* refers to the relationships cultivated by the intervention, i.e., the fellowship program. These connections spanned from between and among the Entrepreneur Fellows themselves to their families, friends, mentors, co-workers, and community members. This theme is also supported by the relationships formed by Fellows with U.S. participants during the fellowship programming, especially regarding mentors (Taylor et al., 2020). One of the three subthemes within *interpersonal connections* was *community engagement*. This subtheme reflected the Fellows' desires to positively affect their communities through the operation of their enterprises, especially by job creation. Several of the ventures sought to employ youth, and some worked primarily as youth development organizations. Further, several Entrepreneur Fellows served other marginalized groups such as smallholder farmers and women. The subtheme *importance of relationships* indicated how much the Fellows valued connections with the individuals who supported and benefitted from their enterprises.

The theme *interpersonal connections* was also undergirded by the subtheme *networking and communication*. This subtheme illuminated the communication behaviors and professional

activities in which the Fellows engaged. Among these behaviors was the facilitation and maintenance of open lines of communication surrounding their enterprises. In addition, to stay well-informed regarding all facets of their businesses, the entrepreneurs leveraged social media platforms, professional associations, and industry-related events.

The theme *entrepreneurial spirit* included three subthemes: *accessing capital, growth and goal-oriented*, and *seeking and sharing information*. These subthemes were supported by codes closely linked to HCT (Becker, 1962; Salamon, 1991), and in particular the impacts of behavioral interventions and the benefits of investing in human capital. Together these subthemes encapsulated the motivations, goals, and challenges shared by the Entrepreneur Fellows. The difficulties expressed by the Fellows when securing and sustaining funding for their enterprises fomented the subtheme *accessing capital*, i.e., their attempts to negotiate and overcome the subjective norms they faced (Ajzen, 1991; see Figure 2). Moreover, this subtheme exposed the ways in which the entrepreneurs addressed financial constraints through cost-cutting measures, fundraising efforts, and by using government initiatives and the services of lending agencies.

The subtheme of *growth and goal-oriented* exemplified the goal-seeking behaviors of the Fellows, as well as their abilities to distinguish and seize opportunities. Many of the Fellows shared plans for future expansion and new projects. These intentions and actions evinced the Entrepreneur Fellows having increased their perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; see Figure 2). The subtheme *seeking and sharing information* was derived from the Fellows' dedication to lifelong learning and their willingness to share new information with their peers, colleagues, clients, and customers.

The broad outcomes of the fellowship experience, as viewed by participants one year after the program's conclusion, are highlighted by the theme *impact of the fellowship* and its related subthemes. Several of the Fellows expressed that being selected for the fellowship was a mark of validation and achievement. These statements led to developing the subtheme *Oklahoma State University as a measure of success*. Further, the subtheme *new global network* reflects the connections that Fellows established between members of the two fellowship cohorts, three SSA nations, faculty and students of Oklahoma State University, and members of the institution's community. The *impacts of the fellowship* were also shown by the subtheme *creation of a youth development organization*. Fellows from all three participant countries engaged in the creation and launch of an organization with the aim of changing the perceptions of young people about agriculture and its viability as a livelihood opportunity worthy of SSA youth pursuing.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

We recommend that future programming devote significant time to developing and delivering strategies regarding the acquisition of financing. Insufficient access to capital was a pervasive challenge for the entrepreneurs regardless of their scale of operation, socio-economic status, or enterprise. As such, discussion of funding sources, e.g., private micro-credit, savings and lending institutions, granting agencies, and governmental actors, should be prioritized.

Our findings emphasized the value of professional development opportunities such as the fellowship program. The Entrepreneur Fellows, after their participation, were equipped with new ideas, practices, strategies, and technologies to bolster their entrepreneurial pursuits, i.e., they expressed an increase in perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; see Figure 2). One of the most significant benefits noted by the Fellows was the formation of a new network resulting from the fellowship program, including their use of social media platforms to create

and sustain relationships (Maroney, 2015). Therefore, we recommend that future programs facilitate consistent and sustained communication and networking opportunities for their participants. Further, our findings emphasize the importance of ongoing mentorship relationships. Upcoming fellowship programs should encourage and facilitate the establishment and continuance of relationships between mentors and their Entrepreneur Fellow protégés (Taylor et al., 2020). Resources from the original funding source could be sought or other potential donors solicited to support this ongoing mentorship (Taylor et al., 2020).

### Recommendations for Research

We recommend that future investigations include an economic impact study to further explore the effects empowered entrepreneurs have on their communities. In addition to assessing the economic impacts of entrepreneurs, we recommend that future inquiries follow up on the progress of these Entrepreneur Fellows in a multi-year, longitudinal study (Rogers, 2003). Additional research should also assess the Fellows' progress toward the goals they outlined during and after their fellowship experiences. We further recommend that future research evaluate the long-term impacts of the youth development organization established by the Entrepreneur Fellows. GLO-PAYA (see Figure 3) was founded to address the need for more youth to enter the agricultural sector in SSA and to pursue careers in agriculture and its allied fields (Mukembo et al., 2014, 2015). However, additional research should be conducted regarding the impact of youth development efforts on the agricultural sphere of SSA, including the human capital of aspiring agricultural and food entrepreneurs.

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