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THE STUDY OF AFGRAD ALUMNI:  
TRAINING HIGH LEVEL HUMAN RESOURCES FOR AFRICAN  
DEVELOPMENT, 1963-1980 (tentative)

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1963, the African Graduate Fellowship Program, known by the acronym AFGRAD, has provided 80-100<sup>125</sup> fellowships a year to African students for graduate level training in universities throughout the United States. It is managed by the African-American Institute (AAI), and funded by African governments, American universities, <sup>(6)</sup> and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Through the years, the primary purpose of AFGRAD has been to train African students who would return home, use their training, and move into significant technical and managerial positions in universities and in governmental and parastatal institutions. More recently, it was also anticipated that some would assume jobs in profit-making institutions. All alumni were expected to strengthen and influence the growth and development of their respective institutions, and to transfer their technical capabilities to subordinates and the younger generation.

Late in 1982, AAI, with funding from USAID, initiated The Study of AFGRAD Alumni: Training High Level Human Resources for African Development, 1963-1980 to examine how the 1,681<sup>U</sup> African students who

were trained during the 1960's and 1970's have used their graduate training, and how AFGRAD and other similar participant training programs might be improved. By the end of 1982, 1,535 of these students had become alumni, and 146 were still in the process of completing graduate degrees.

The study focuses on the alumni: their training, career development, and professional experience. It uses indicators such as the kind of position, level of decision-making responsibility, and involvement in various kinds of institution-building tasks to examine the career patterns of the alumni and to infer how they may have contributed to social and economic development in Africa. It analyzes the similarities and differences in these patterns by gender, sub-region,<sup>3)</sup> first year of fellowship,<sup>3)</sup> and field of study.

Background data for the alumni were retrieved from their student files in AAI's archives. A questionnaire was sent to all living alumni (1,508) requesting information about current employment, job history, and professional experience as well as an assessment of the AFGRAD program. Anecdotal material that supplements the major concerns was gathered in interviews with 73 alumni in Cameroon, Mali, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Zambia. An IBM personal computer is being used for all data entry, verification, analysis, and reports. Data analysis is still on-going but nearing completion. The final report and alumni directory should be available in fall

1984.

The study confirms that AFGRAD has achieved its primary purpose. Almost all alumni are working in the fields in which they were trained. They have moved into high level decision-making and technical positions in various kinds of institutions. Despite major constraints in carrying out their job tasks and responsibilities, they are in positions that enable them to formulate, revise, and implement policy and procedures, and to transfer technical knowledge and skills. The discussion here presents some preliminary results. It focuses on the changes that have occurred in the patterns of employment and levels of decision-making responsibility between the alumni's first jobs after AFGRAD and their current ones. It also looks at their involvement in policy-making and research activities. Before turning to these changes, there is a brief description of the entire alumni population and the questionnaire respondents.

#### BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ALUMNI POPULATION

The students who received AFGRAD fellowships came from thirty-nine African countries. Table I shows the number of students by country.

TABLE IAFGRAD Students by Country, 1963-1980Group A (Over 100 Students)

Cameroon	101
Ethiopia	182
Ghana	195
Kenya	107
Nigeria	<u>207</u>
sub-total:	792 (47%)

Group B (50-99 Students)

Ivory Coast	78
Liberia	53
Mali	52
Sierra Leone	57
Sudan	53
Tanzania	49
Uganda	82
Zaire	<u>55</u>
sub-total:	479 (28%)

Group C (20-49 Students)

Lesotho	26
Madagascar	29
Malawi	41
Senegal	43
Swaziland	24
Togo	35
Tunisia	26
Upper Volta	26
Zambia	<u>49</u>
sub-total:	299 (18%)

Group D (1-19 Students)

Benin	12
Botswana	15
Burundi	5
Chad	3
Congo	5
Djibouti	1
Gambia	12
Guinea	4
Mauritania	3
Mauritius	12
Morocco	8
Mozambique	1
Niger	4
Rwanda	3
Somalia	17
South Africa	1
Zimbabwe	<u>5</u>
sub-total:	111 (7%)

GRAND TOTAL: 1,681 (100%)

Seventy-five percent of them came from thirteen countries, and almost half, from five countries. Most were born in English-speaking African (70%) countries and arrived in the United States with a good command of the English language. An overwhelming majority (91%) of the students were men. Almost one-third were already married. When the students applied for an AFGRAD fellowship, over two-thirds of them were working full-time. Most anticipated pursuing careers in academic and research institutions (54%) or in government service (26%). Very few planned to work in the private sector or in international organizations.<sup>5</sup>

AFGRAD supported graduate study at both the master's and doctoral degree levels, but it clearly emphasized training at the master's degree level. Most students (75%) received a master's degree. Some students received both degrees and some received fellowships just for doctoral level training. Altogether, 31% of the students received doctorates. Almost one-fourth also participated in practical training programs that lasted an average of three to six months after they completed their academic work. The strength of the rigorous procedures followed by the African governments, the American deans' committee, and AAI to select AFGRAD scholars is reflected in the low rate of withdrawal from each level of graduate training (less than 5%).

Over the years, nearly every academic discipline was represented in

AFGRAD. However, both master's and doctoral students, respectively 64% and 71%, tended to major in five fields (agriculture, engineering, education, mathematics/science, and economics). In addition, a sizeable proportion of master's students (14%) enrolled in MBA programs. Engineering was the most popular master's field (19%) and mathematics/science, the most popular doctoral field (20%).

Observable shifts occurred over time in the choice of the academic fields being studied at both degree levels. For example, at the doctoral level, there was a steady increase in the proportion of students majoring in agriculture, education, business, and health. Almost 20% of the doctoral students in the early 1960's were preparing to become veterinarians, medical doctors, and dentists, but by the end of the decade, the proportion had declined dramatically to 3%. At the master's level, there was a steady increase in the proportion of students working on degrees in only two fields, business and health. Interest in the other academic fields fluctuated inconsistently from 1963 to 1980. Choice of an academic field was also affected by sub-region. For example, the highest proportion (almost 40%) of students who majored in business and economics came from French-speaking West Africa, while the smallest proportion (14%) came from English-speaking West Africa. The steady increase in the choice of business,

in particular, coincided with the efforts to recruit more AFGRAD scholars from the French-speaking African countries.

### QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Over half (52%) of the alumni completed and returned questionnaires. The sample of alumni who responded to the questionnaire is representative of the entire alumni population in terms of gender, geographic sub-region, first year of fellowship, field of study, and career goals. Ninety percent of the alumni are currently working in Africa (87%) or abroad as diplomats and international civil servants (3%). Of the sixty-seven respondents who are working abroad on their own, 60% are from Ethiopia, Ghana, or Uganda. 4)

### ALUMNI CAREER DEVELOPMENT

#### Employment Patterns

The kinds of institutions that alumni first worked in after completing AFGRAD and are working in now are shown in Table 2. Consistent with their career goals before AFGRAD, the great majority of alumni (85%) held their

**TABLE 2**  
Kind of Institution for First and Current Jobs  
of All Alumni

<u>Institution</u>	<u>First Job</u> (%)	<u>Current Job</u> (%)	<u>Change</u> (%)
Education and Research	59.7	52.0	-7.7
Governmental and Parastatal	25.1	23.9	-1.2
Banking and Private Sector	11.7	16.8	+5.1
International Organi- zation	3.5	7.2	+3.7
	100.0	100.0	0.0

first jobs in education and research institutions or in governmental and parastatal agencies, respectively, 60% and 25%. While most alumni (80%) are still working in these institutions, a higher proportion are now employed in banks, international organizations, and the private sector. Table 3 shows a sharper pattern of change between the first and current jobs of those who were trained during the first ten years of AFGRAD. The older alumni are much more likely to have moved out of education and research institutions or governmental and parastatal agencies for jobs in banks,

**TABLE 3**  
Kind of Institution for First and Current Jobs  
of Alumni Trained in First Ten Years

<u>Institution</u>	<u>First Job</u>	<u>Current Job</u>	<u>Change</u>
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Education and Research	62.6	52.7	-9.9
Governmental and Parastatal	23.6	18.4	-5.2
Banking and Private Sector	10.3	19.0	+8.7
International Organi- zation	3.4	9.8	+6.4
	100.0	100.0	0.0

international organizations, and the private sector.

Women (71%) were more likely than men (59%) to find their first jobs in education and research institutions. A higher proportion of men entered each of the other types of institutions. This gender pattern persists in the current jobs of alumni but a smaller proportion of both men and women are now working in education and research institutions. Following the major differences in their fields of study, the first and current jobs of French-speaking West Africans vary significantly from those of other alumni. In particular, they are much less likely to obtain employment in

education and research institutions, and much more likely to find it in each of the other types of institutions.

### Levels of Decision-Making Responsibility

The first and current job titles of the alumni were each ranked from one (highest) to five (lowest), according to the level of decision-making responsibility they represented in the institution of employment. <sup>5)</sup> The rankings facilitated a comparison of levels of decision-making responsibility across employers as well as by the other variables used throughout the study. The following are examples of the kinds of job titles included in each level:

Level 1: university vice-chancellor, minister of state, bank governor, and managing director.

Level 2: dean of faculty, head of a research center or academic department, and head of a major division in one of the non-academic institutions.

Level 3: chief/principal/senior technical specialist or researcher, senior lecturer, and head of a smaller unit (chef de service and chef de bureau) in one of the non-academic institutions.

Level 4: technical specialist, research officer, assistant professor, and an assistant head of a smaller unit in one of the non-academic institutions.

Level 5: instructor or tutor, research assistant, teacher, and trainee or intern.

All alumni, regardless of when they were trained, had similar kinds of

decision-making responsibility in their first jobs. Through the years, there was a solid and consistent movement of alumni into the highest levels of decision-making. For example, Table 4 demonstrates that there was over a fivefold increase in the proportion of alumni who moved into top positions between their first and current jobs (from 7% to 34% in levels 1 and 2). At the same time, the proportion of those now working at the lowest levels (4 & 5) has decreased from 76% to 39%. The rise into high level positions is even more dramatic for the alumni who were trained during the first ten years of AFGRAD (Table 5). Over 50% of them have now moved into top positions (levels 1 and 2) in their respective institutions of employment. The increase in decision-making responsibility is also observable within each category of employer but especially in the banks and private sector. Here, the percent of alumni who moved into level 1 and 2 positions between their first and current jobs increased from a mere 1% to nearly 40%.

**TABLE 4**  
**Level of Responsibility in First and Current**  
**Jobs of All Alumni**

<u>Level</u>	<u>First Job</u>	<u>Current Job</u>	<u>Change</u>
	(%)	(%)	(%)
1	0.9	8.7	+ 7.8
2	5.6	25.6	+20.0
3	16.9	25.6	+ 8.7
4	65.9	35.6	-30.3
5	10.2	3.7	- 6.5
	100.0	100.0	0.0

**TABLE 5**  
**Level of Responsibility in First and Current**  
**Jobs of Alumni Trained in First Ten Years**

<u>Level</u>	<u>First Job</u>	<u>Current Job</u>	<u>Change</u>
	(%)	(%)	(%)
1	0.9	13.5	+12.6
2	5.1	37.0	+31.9
3	16.0	25.2	+ 9.2
4	66.0	20.9	-45.1
5	12.0	2.0	-10.0
	100.0	100.0	0.0

**Participation in Policy-Making and Research Activities**

Alumni were asked to indicate the number of times they had carried out a variety of tasks that could be used to infer their involvement in the process of institution-building. For example, they were queried about how often they had developed or revised a policy and operating procedures, directed a research project, and participated in a research project. Over 70% of the alumni who now work in mid- to high-level (1-3) positions have

had some experience in developing or revised a policy and operating procedures. Those who have been most frequently involved in policy-making are now in top jobs (levels 1 and 2) whereas, those who have been most frequently involved in developing operating procedures are currently holding mid-level (3) positions. Over 50% of the alumni who are now in lower level (4 and 5) positions have never had any experience in carrying out these tasks. Two-thirds of all the alumni have participated in research projects. Level of current job once again points to those who have more frequently directed research projects: over 50% of those now in high level (1 and 2) positions have considerable experience in this area compared to under 40% of those now in mid-level (3) positions.

### CONCLUSION

The preliminary results of the study confirm that almost all of the alumni are using the graduate training they received under AFGRAD. The great majority of them are employed in Africa or abroad as diplomats and international civil servants. Through the years, education and

research institutions have continued to employ over half of the alumni thereby placing them in a strategic position to transfer their knowledge and skills to the next generation. About one-fourth of them have always worked in governmental and parastatal agencies, often in mid- and high-level positions. More alumni have moved into jobs in banks, international organizations, and the private sector, particularly those trained during the first ten years of AFGRAD. Most importantly, though, over half of the older alumni now have the major responsibility for policy formation and decision-making in their respective places of employment.

NOTES

1. This number includes 45 students who received fellowships in the 1960's from other sources, not AFGRAD. AAI also managed their fellowships and included them in AFGRAD for administrative purposes. Subsequently, five of these students received AFGRAD fellowships to continue graduate studies.
2. Alumni were placed into sub-regions according to the country that nominated them for an AFGRAD fellowship. They were divided into six sub-regions:

Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, Madagascar, Mauritius, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Central Africa: Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Rwanda, and Zaire.

Northern Africa: Morocco and Tunisia. Data from this sub-region have not been reported here. It is very small and has not been included in AFGRAD in recent years.

Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

West Africa/English-speaking: Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.

West Africa/French-speaking: Benin, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Upper Volta.

3. Alumni were placed into time periods according to the year that they entered AFGRAD. They were divided into four time periods:

1963-1968, 1969-1972, 1973-1976, and 1977-1980.

4. Some of these alumni returned home after completing their graduate work but others did not do so. Most noted the political or economic difficulties they would face if they returned home at this time.
  
5. The researchers developed the ranking scheme in consultation with others who are knowledgeable about job levels in different kinds of institutions in French-speaking and English-speaking Africa. The scheme will be fully described and appraised in the study's final report.