

# **Effects of Interaction of Graduates in Empowering Rural Communities through a BAC-GORTA Scholarship-Training Programme of selected areas in Kenya**

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## **Abstract**

*Training institutions dealing with agriculture and rural development in Kenya face major challenges in their approaches and methods to education and training. These challenges include but are not limited to; inadequate funding, falling student enrolment, inadequate practical skills, poor quality and irrelevant programmes, diminishing graduate employment opportunities and lack of clear and well articulated vision and mission. This has led to inability of such institutions to achieve their training and education objectives. Consequently, some development partners have shown greater concern and interest in supporting training institutions in Kenya. Against this background, a study was carried out on one such scholarship programme in selected parts of Nyanza, Rift-Valley and Western provinces of Kenya. Both qualitative and survey research design were adopted in the study. Data was collected from a sample of 100 graduates selected from a population of 280 past graduates. A questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The collected data was collated, coded and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at significance level of 0.05. This paper examines the effects of the scholarship training programme offered by Baraka Agricultural College in Kenya and supported by GORTA, a Northern development partner. The results show how the scholarship support scheme facilitated in the empowerment of communities and enabled them attain some levels of sustainable development. Further, the paper reveals that through the scholarship scheme, graduates have actively played their roles in their communities by contributing positively to changes in communities' livelihoods as well as achieving their self-reliance expectations. This study concludes by highlighting the need for support for training institutions and key persons in the community to act as facilitators of development and consequently provides recommendations to various stakeholders.*

**Key words:** learning, scholarship, rural, empowerment, communities, development

## **Introduction**

It is important to note that the Millennium Development Goals single out education for youth as a key target group. Target 16 of the MDGs is 'to develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth'. The World Development Report published by the World Bank (2007) focused on youth, which is a sign of a growing awareness among donor agencies and civil society organizations about the actual and potential roles of youth in the development process. The global population of young people aged 12-24 is currently 1.3 billion. The youth population is projected to peak at 1.5 billion in 2035 and it will increase most rapidly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South East Asia (by 26 percent and 20 percent respectively between 2005 and 2035). FAO estimates that around 55 percent of youth reside in rural areas.

Institutions of learning in the areas of agriculture and rural development are facing major challenges the world over. In Kenya for instance, these challenges include; limited funding, falling student enrolment, inadequate practical skills, poor quality and irrelevant programmes, diminishing graduate employment opportunities and lack of clear and well articulated vision and mission (Temu et al., 2004: 406). Knowledge is a critical asset in all aspects of development

such as planning, managing natural resources on a sustainable basis and providing interventions to rural problems that include poverty, food insecurity and unemployment (ICRAF, 2002). Globalization of these issues has brought a great challenge to approaches and learning methods at different levels of education and training.

This study involved looking at community empowerment through student scholarship support offered by Baraka Agricultural College (BAC) through GORTA an Irish development NGO; this was with particular reference to community participation in the selection and implementation process. The study analysed the direct beneficiary (graduate) performance after training as well as the benefits to the indirect beneficiary (community). The next section gives an overview of the institutions involved, the training approach used and the trainees' selection process.

### **Baraka Agricultural College Training Approach**

Baraka Agricultural College (BAC) is one of the rural training centres in Kenya which assists individuals and communities to tackle development challenges through its education and training programmes. Its mission is to develop the capacity of the rural communities so that they can respond from within to the challenges that face them. BAC does this by promoting a Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) concept through its programmes. Over the last several years, BAC has been educating and training women and men from rural communities so that they return to their communities with skills, knowledge and self-confidence to facilitate the development process.

Since 1997, BAC jointly undertook a partnership arrangement with GORTA, an Irish development Non Governmental Organization (NGO) in collaboration with local communities. GORTA supports sustainable development projects in developing countries. In an effort to improve the development capacity of the rural communities from the grassroots, the two support a scholarship scheme that enables poor women and men from rural communities in Eastern Africa to attend training at Baraka Agricultural College in the area of agriculture and rural development.

### **Selection for the GORTA Scholarship Scheme at BAC**

Selected rural communities, in consultation with BAC staff, nominate committed persons that have a history of community involvement. From those nominated, one woman and one man are selected from each locality by way of a written test and interview. A representative of the community is usually a member of the interview panel. The community is expected to contribute a small amount of funds as a 'commitment' in support of each selected candidate. This money is returned to the community in form of projects established and promoted by the student on completion of the course. All the tuition costs are catered for in the scholarship by GORTA. On completion of the sixteen months training programme, the graduate is expected to transform into a more self reliant individual and work with the community for a minimum of one year, in promoting an appropriate development strategy.

The selection approach enumerated above has had its own shortcomings as per BAC progress annual reports. In the report (Dolan, 2000; 2003), it was stated that previously it was not easy 'to match a target community (indirect beneficiary) with a particular student (direct beneficiary) for a wider and more spread multiplier effect of the scheme'.

## **Literature Review**

The countries of Eastern Africa share similar biophysical and socio-economical features. The region has a fast-growing population that is being challenged by socio-economic problems such as poverty and food security. Education systems in this region are often not very well adapted to the needs of rural communities (ICRAF, 2002).

Eastern Africa countries which consist of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia face two major challenges in enabling education for sustainable development. The first is to ensure that trainers in vocational and third level institutions get relevant education that will meet their learning needs, especially essential life skills. The Second is to enable resources that are available serve as a basis for sustainable development that will result in more active and sustainable participation in the local and global economy and poverty reduction. These challenges are closely interrelated.

Available literature indicates that up to 80 percent of the population of Eastern African countries live in rural areas and that 60 percent lives below poverty line; 30 to 40 percent of them being chronically poor (The Chronic Poverty Report 2004-2005). Kenya's population was 32 million as per National Population and Housing Census (2009) and the Dimensions of Well-Being in Kenya Report (World Bank Report, 2003), indicated that 34 districts in Kenya, out of a total of 63 had at least one location with more than 70 per cent of population living below the poverty line. Additionally, the capacity of available resources to meet the demands for the growing population in terms of food and other basic needs remains unsatisfactory. Most of the population in Kenya is rural; practicing subsistence agriculture which employs 70 percent of Kenya's workforce. Population growth and increasing demand for food, combined with drought and other negative aspects, is putting pressure on available natural resources.

Current development policies are strongly based on the dominant development paradigm which downplays the role of agriculture in the development process. Equally, there is lack of resources and government policies which result in fewer, poorly resourced, lowly motivated services in rural areas according to Baraka Agricultural College (BAC) Annual Report (1999). Today, there are very few governments in Africa that can claim to be in a position to fully support tertiary agricultural education (Temu et al, 2004). Temo et al. further note that 'even if they were able to do so now, it is unlikely to be sustainable' (p 61). Tertiary institutions are all facing severe budgetary constraints and draw on populations that cannot easily pay the full costs of their education (Muir-Leresche, 2006: 10).

Streamlining the financing of education and training as well as improving its relevance within the context of sustainable development is a critical element. Due to resource constraints and lack of proper strategies, as well as the access to relevant knowledge and skills, rural development has been hampered. Minde (2003) says that those who are likely to be served by the graduates have economic and moral obligation to co-fund the training. However, extending the benefits of education opportunities means addressing the constraints in terms of public and private resources. There is thus need for a change from within and also amongst policy makers towards development approaches. Muir-Leresche (2006) supports this notion when he says that there needs for a paradigm shift in education. The objective should no longer be how much knowledge

has been acquired, but how effectively and responsibly available knowledge can be used. This can be achieved through education for sustainable development as observed in the Education for Sustainable Development in Kenya Stakeholders' workshop (Sambili et al., 2003).

Training and education for empowering rural community offer good opportunities for improving relevance and quality of education that addresses some of the development challenges. In 1997, BAC embarked on a new and less tried path for education and training support. Recognizing that education and training had the potential to deliver new options for reducing poverty, improving food security, and sustaining community development, the college in collaboration with others expanded its mandate to include a more proactive approach to achieve greater impact in rural development. This saw the initiation of beginning the scholarship scheme.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Mentoring theory by Rhodes and Lowe (2008) informed the framework of this study. It provides a background against which the effects of interaction of graduates in empowering rural communities can be understood, as well as give an account of how the sponsorship provided by GORTA through Baraka Agricultural College impacted on communities from where the students were selected.

Studies of mentoring and informal training programmes have shown that adult mentors can play an important role in facilitating the development of positive identities for youth in community development approaches by providing youth with opportunities to see themselves as capable of knowing, understanding, and doing facilitation work (National Research Council, 2009). Rhodes and Lowe's mentoring model describes mentors as supporting youth in three ways; socio-emotionally, cognitively, and in identity development. Rhodes (2005) theorizes that as youth may view mentors as role models, these influences inform their decision making and perceptions of their future possibilities. Deutsch and Spencer (2009) suggest that the approach mentors take in working with youth is an important factor in the success of mentoring relationships and developing positive youth identities. Mentors who, for example, understand the values and worldviews of the youth with which they work, can help to foster the negotiation of bicultural identities for youth (Liang & West, 2007). Liang and West also support the view that mentors may be able to offer youth unique resources by drawing from their culturally similar experiences.

Mentorship through apprenticeship can positively influence the perception youth have of themselves as community-oriented. Stake (2006), for example, found that social encouragement from teachers and parents is an important predictor of youths' development attitudes. Additionally, Barron et al. (2009) found that parents can play a variety of roles that support youth learning in institutions; roles such as trainer, learning facilitator or resource provider. Adults who allow youth to draw on their own discursive patterns, funds of knowledge and their associated identities can help youth break down some of the barriers that they may experience in their everyday lives.

Mentoring may therefore be widely accepted as a strategy for facilitating the professional growth and development of students while they are socialized into a given discipline. As a component of the professional-socialization process, mentoring can influence how individuals prepare themselves and develop various values, skills, knowledge, and attitudes throughout their

academic and professional careers. BAC graduates were thus mentored through provision of sponsorship and involvement by their trainers and community members.

### **Research Problem and Objectives**

Agricultural Training institutions in Kenya lack the financial capacity and resources to support training programmes that would enable graduates return to their localities in order to facilitate self-motivated development. In particular, private rural training centres in Kenya that are not run by government do not get public funding, even though the government values their work. As a result, institutions like BAC had tended to focus on producing graduates who were seeking employment in formal sectors. Delivery was fragmented, with a lack of clear learning pathways and yet, tertiary education must be able to cater for life-long learning as well as respond to students who seek to be locally relevant and who can become self-employed graduates with a holistic understanding of livelihoods approaches and natural resource management problems.

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of the interaction of graduates scholarships offered through BAC on the community livelihoods development from selected areas in Kenya. The specific objectives were: To identify the perceptions on the BAC/ GORTA scheme effectiveness; to determine the performance and role of the graduates, in their communities, after completion of the training; to identify how the community needs were being met with regard to benefits from training facilitation; and finally to make recommendations that could be used to improve such scholarship arrangements in future.

### **Research Methodology**

Given the nature of this study, a quantitative approach was adapted but integrated with qualitative method in order to assess the breadth of the responses. Qualitative method was primarily based on 'self-perception' research tools. Quantitative survey was done using questionnaires. The site of the field survey and semi-structured interview was limited to scholarship programme areas of Western Kenya region comprising Nyanza, Rift-Valley and Western provinces for cost effectiveness and timeliness purposes. However for the structured survey, respondents were drawn from all GORTA scheme areas in Kenya.

The sample chosen to be surveyed was selected from a population of 280 past BAC graduates. Target population comprised students who had graduated from BAC between the years 2001 and 2004. Respondents were selected by use of both multi-period clustering and simple random sampling in order to obtain a proportional and equal distribution from the four years under study. Fifty per cent of respondents were selected from those who had benefited from the BAC / GORTA scholarships, while the remaining fifty percent were non-scholarship graduates. A sample size of 100 graduates was selected for structured survey; this was deemed appropriate due to some logistical considerations.

Additionally, in as far as the semi-structured interview and observational analysis was concerned, a sample was picked from three subgroups: GORTA graduates locations; Non- GORTA-graduates locations and Non-BAC-graduates locations. One third of the structured survey target respondents (38) were visited in their localities and a total of 24 locations were considered for in-depth survey. Fourteen of these locations were those with GORTA supported graduates, five non-GORTA graduates and five non-BAC graduates.

A structured questionnaire was developed to capture information pertaining to graduates. These included: Personal profile; education and experience status; support mechanisms; value of GORTA scholarship; and after graduation situations. The questionnaire was then pre-tested with a group 2004/2005 GORTA graduates attending a seminar at BAC. Together with a cover letter detailing the purpose of the study and the precautionary/ ethical measures, the questionnaire was administered through postage. Data was collected between the last week of June and the third week of July 2006. The return rate for the questionnaire was considered good (59 out of 100); taking into account it was a postal survey.

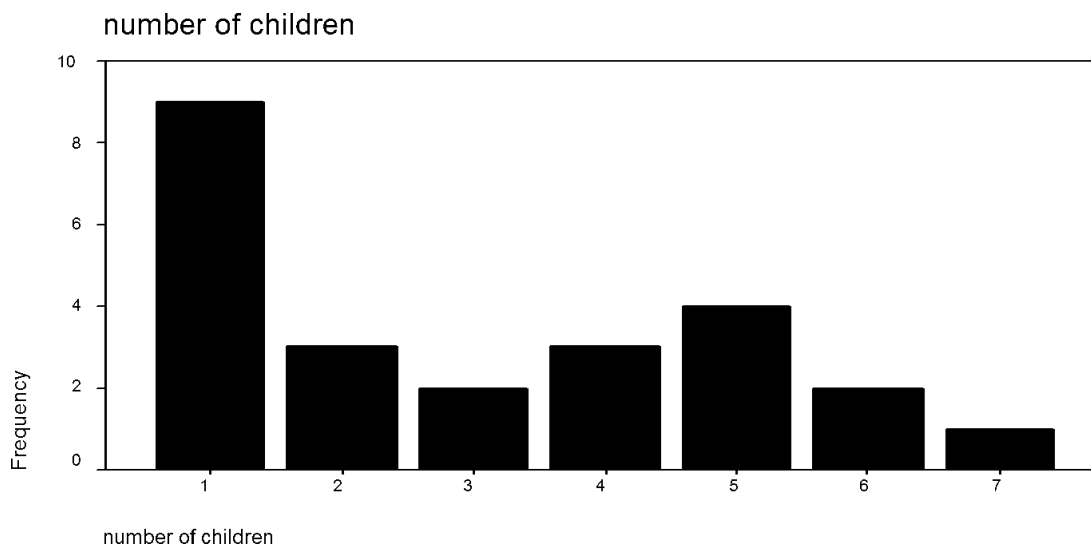
A 'self-realization' technique which involved a self-critical approach was used. It considered the opinions of the target respondents on attitudes to selected issues that required addressing the wider impact of literacy process on community development and empowerment. Their perceptions were then recorded.

Data from the quantitative survey was collated, coded and analysed using statistical package, SPSS version 11.5. Additional statistical significance testing was employed using the Chi-square at 0.05, through cross-tabulation, to test for differences, relationships and associations between variables of interest. Descriptive statistics and tables were then used to summarize the results. Analytical tools of content analysis were used to treat descriptive data generated from community members' discussions and semi-structured interviews with graduates and other community facilitators.

### **Results and Discussion**

Thirty four respondents (59 %) were male and 24 were female (41 %). The respondents' ages ranged from 23 to 44 years with an average of 27 years. The majority (74%) were 30 years or younger while only 5 percent were 40 years or older.

Over half the respondents (56%) reported to be single and 25 respondents (44 %) were married. Those who were married, had an average of three children while just over half (58%) had one or two children; 29 percent had three to four children whereas 12.5 percent reported to have more than five children. Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by the number of children per household.



**Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by number of children per household (n=24)**

### Education and Experience Characteristics

The vast majority of respondents (95%) had secondary level education and only a small proportion (5%) had post-secondary education. Half of the respondents (29) had some kind of work experience (See Table 1). Of these, a big percent (48.3%) had farming related experience, 17.2 percent social and community work and 13.8 percent business exposure. The remaining respondents had other types of work experience. This is in agreement with the literature that most rural youth have not been mentored towards professional development as the majority have only attained academic qualifications.

**Table 1: Distribution of graduates by type of work experience (n=29)**

Type of work experience	No. of respondents	%
Farming related	14	48.3
Business related	4	13.8
Social/community work	5	17.2
Professional career	1	3.4
Other	5	17.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

### Information on BAC

The most common (29% of respondents) source of information through which graduates initially learnt about the existence of BAC and the training opportunity was through past students who had already graduated from the college. Others got the information through community and NGO representatives (14.5%), parent/relatives (9.1%) and BAC staff (9.1%). The rest obtained the information from various different sources as seen on table 2.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by how they first learned about BAC (n=55\*)**

<b>Source of Information</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
past students of BAC	16	29.1
Community rep. / NGO rep.	8	14.5
BAC staff	5	9.1
friends	3	9.1
parents/relatives	5	9.1
government	1	1.8
media	5	9.1
Others	12	21.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100.0</b>

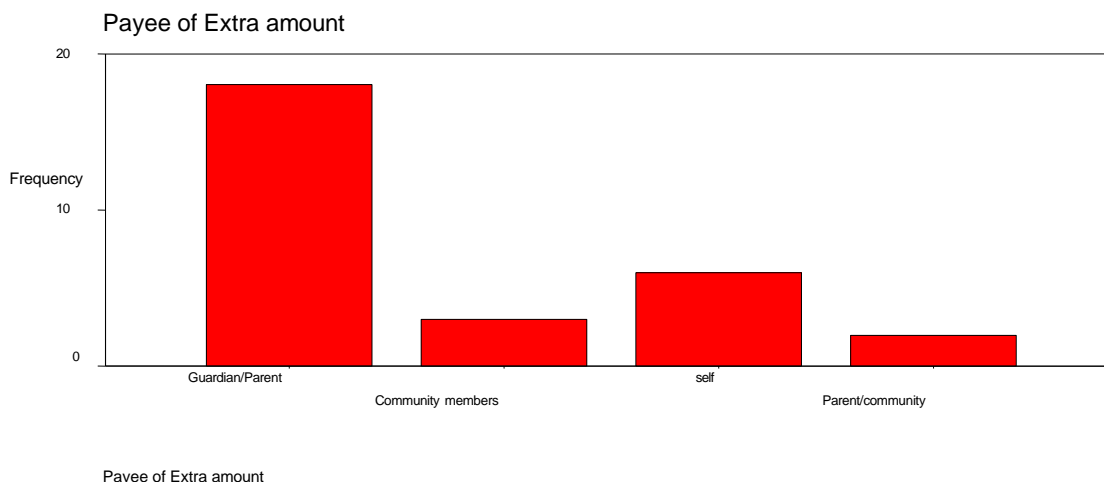
\*3 respondents did not give their sources of information about BAC

Thirty respondents (64% of sample) who joined BAC were supported by the GORTA/BAC scholarship and got their information about the training opportunity through community leaders (30%), 27 percent got this information from local NGO representatives, relatives / parents (10%) while the remaining 33 percent got it from a combination of other sources.

The majority of the GORTA-sponsored graduates, who were 28 (93%), were nominated and selected by BAC staff together with the community members. The rest who were only two from the sample (7%) had been sponsored by their families. Nearly half of the GORTA-sponsored graduates had received all the necessary information materials to enable them to prepare for selection. The majority of the respondents (77%) got both the scholarship condition information and the application forms. Twenty six respondents (93% sample) said that the information they received allowed them to make the necessary preparations, while only a small percentage (7.1%) said the information did not help them.

### **Scholarship Scheme**

All 30 GORTA-supported graduates sampled said that the funding did not cover all their costs associated with undertaking the BAC study programme. Most of them (80%) paid between Kshs 5,000 to 15,000 (1 Euro=Kshs 90) as additional amounts while 20 percent reported that they paid over Kshs 15,000 as extra amounts towards the costs of study. This money was paid mainly by parents /guardians (62%) while 21 percent of the respondents paid for themselves. Only a small proportion (10.3%) indicated that the community paid for the costs (See Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by source of extra payments for BAC Programme Costs (n=29)**

### Views on Scholarship Value

All the GORTA-sponsored graduates' beneficiaries found the scholarship support very useful (100%). The thing they liked most about the scholarship scheme was the payment of course fees (34.1%). This was followed by the targeting /selection process (22.4%) and the focus on community link which were 20 percent (Table 3).

**Table 3: Distribution of supported graduate by things liked about scholarship (n=85\*)**

Liked thing	1st liked n=30	2nd liked n=30	3rd liked n=25	total	%
Course fee payment	12	12	5	29	34.1
Targeting & selection	6	5	8	19	22.4
Focus on community	3	8	6	17	20.0
After graduation support	1	3	3	7	8.2
Training delivery	8	2	2	12	14.1
Follow-up process	-	-	1	1	1.2

**\*Up to three different responses were given by each respondent**

As for the 'least liked thing', 33 per cent mentioned financial support after graduation; 28 percent said they did not like how follow-up was done, while the remaining respondents gave other aspects (Table 4).

**Table 4: Distribution of graduates by aspects of the support scheme that was ‘least liked’ (n=64\*)**

Least liked thing	1 <sup>st</sup> least liked n=27	2 <sup>nd</sup> least liked n=21	3 <sup>rd</sup> least liked n=16	Total	%
No proper follow-up	7	3	5	16	25.0
Selection by community	7	3	4	14	21.8
Post-graduation finance	4	12	5	21	32.8
No job access	4	1	-	5	7.8
No further training	3	1	2	6	9.4
Community factors	1	-	-	1	1.6
Work attire not given	1	-	-	1	1.6

**\* Up to three different responses were given by each respondent**

#### **Assessment of Effectiveness of Scholarship Aspects**

The majority of the respondents rated general support after graduation and follow-up process as being ‘good to excellent’, at 83 percent and 57 percent respectively, while the actual amount of support given (in monetary terms), identification of potential candidates and selection process were rated poorly (Table 5). This indicates that scholarship support is an essential mentorship approach towards professional development of the beneficiaries as had been discussed in the literature.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents by Rating of Aspects of the Scholarship Scheme (n=30)**

Rating	Aspect Rated						
	Publicity %	Identification of potential candidate %	Selection process %	Community involvement %	Amount of support given %	Support after graduation %	Follow-up process %
<b>Excellent</b>	3.3	-	-	17.2	-	53.3	36.7
<b>Good</b>	16.7	6.7	10.0	13.8	13.3	30.0	20.0
<b>Average</b>	46.7	6.7	26.7	41.4	16.7	13.3	16.7
<b>Poor</b>	33.3	70.0	63.3	27.6	70.0	3.3	26.7
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

#### **Learning and Capacity Building**

Fifty five of the fifty eight respondents (98%) surveyed said the CSARD had benefited them. Only three respondents (1.8%) said they did not benefit. Of those who said they had benefited from the studies, an average of three said it helped in one way or the other; 42 percent said they acquired better agricultural and facilitation skills; 20 percent were able to apply proper planning

or management skills in their work or daily activities while 16 percent said they were able to be self-employed or self reliant (Table 6).

**Table 6: Distribution of students by how CSARD training helped their daily work/ activities (n=55\*)**

<b>Kind of help</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Proper planning and management	11	20.0
Community involvement/ mobilization	2	3.6
Acquired better agricultural skills/facilitation	23	41.8
Better decision making on implementation	2	3.6
Self confidence in communication	4	7.3
Improved business management/entrepreneurial	2	3.6
Has enabled self employment/reliance	9	16.4
Proper planning +community mobilization	2	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>

**\* 3 respondents did not give their responses**

The study indicated that 20 respondents (38.5%) had taken further training after graduation while 32 (61.5%) had not received any type of training. For those who had taken further training (n=20), 12 respondents (60%) had taken both business and project management training while 7(35%) took agricultural/technical training and the rest had taken training in either social work or leadership skills.

The majority (76%) of those who had not taken some form of training after graduation (n=37) cited financial problems as their main reason for not doing so. For others, it was due to commitment in their employment (5.4%), religious obligations (5.4%) and other varied reasons. The findings tally well with the idea of continuous skills improvement of graduates after attaining professional skills for their lifelong development.

### **Self-Reliance**

The majority of respondents 50 (86.2%) said that their families owned a farm. Among the respondents, slightly over half of them (51%) saw farming related enterprises as a way of sustaining themselves. Eighteen respondents (31.8%) started business oriented enterprises as their preference to achieving self-reliant livelihoods while the rest reported 'other' different means (Table 7).

**Table 7: Distribution of respondents by their plans to achieve self-reliance (n=56\*)**

Means of self-reliance	1 <sup>st</sup> means	2 <sup>nd</sup> means	3 <sup>rd</sup> means	Total	%
Starting farming related-enterprises	26	3	-	29	51.8
Business ventures	11	4	3	18	32.0
Family support	1	-	-	1	1.8
Charging facilitation fees	-	1	-	1	1.8
Initiating a CBO	1	-	-	1	1.8
Full-time employment	1	-	-	1	1.8
Accessing further training	1	-	-	1	1.8
Use of local resources	3	-	-	3	5.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>

\* 2 respondents did not suggest their plans

Forty one respondents (76 %) had started a new enterprise since graduating while 24 percent had not. For those who had initiated a new enterprise, a majority (69.8%) had an agricultural enterprise, 23.3 percent a business enterprise, and the remaining percent had other varied small enterprises. As for agriculture, poultry rearing was the most popular (26.7%), followed by dairying. In case of business oriented enterprises, green groceries (shops selling vegetables and fruits) was first (30%), followed by mini-agro vet shops and bakeries at 20 percent each. A statistically significant relationship existed between owning land and starting a new enterprise ( $p=0.001$ ) as 97.6 percent of those whose families owned land had started new enterprises compared to 2.4 percent of those who had no land. These findings, which are in line with literature cited earlier, are an indication that most graduates require to be mentored for self-reliance.

### **Graduates Self Realization**

This focused on the impact of the BAC training programme on the scholarship graduates and their own sense of self-realization which included their individual skills, knowledge and attitudes that positively affected their self perceptions and the perceptions others had of them.

### **Self-confidence**

Graduates in all 14 of the scholarship supported locations visited during the study felt that they had gained an increased level of confidence as a result of training. This was reflected in their communication skills and involvement in community work. In Ainamoi location, for instance, one female graduate who said she used to be shy before she attended training was emphatic about engaging the youth and women groups in development work. In another location, Bukhayo Central, a graduate said he felt energized when working alongside 'experienced' government workers and within community groups. A female graduate (Mauche location) who was working with a group of men from an ethnic community that does not regard women as leaders seemed at home with the all male self-help group. She was eloquent and enthusiastic when working with them.

Out of the 14 locations, graduates in eight said they felt much more confident in their undertakings but expressed a need for an association of graduates that would give them on-going

support and encouragement in their work. The graduates cited CSARD training and GORTA support after graduating as having positively influenced their self esteem while working in the communities and pursuing their own livelihoods. This impact is in contrast to control locations (Katho, Siboti and Chekalini) where the graduates were not comfortable with themselves and did not express a high sense of being able to act on their own.

### **Problem-solving Skills**

In ten out of the fourteen locations visited where GORTA graduates were working, the young men and women had developed approaches to seeking solutions to problems they faced in their daily activities. Many of them identified their ability to recognize and link with other service providers as having enabled them to address the communities' issues rather than providing 'ready-made solutions'.

In nine out of the fourteen locations, graduates used consultation with others as a way of seeking solutions to problems. In contrast to this is the case of problem-solving skills of the graduate (who was not GORTA-sponsored) in one of the control locations; Kapkatet, who commented that "*the community members always come up with various requirements but I have nothing to offer them except the knowledge I got in college*". This reflects a lack of insight on how to seek solutions to community needs.

Roles played by graduates at household level provide evidence of how they are persuading their own families to solve problems. For most graduates, where their families initially had no regular or alternative income sources, it was possible to address this through their interventions after graduation. For example, in East Sakwa, a predominantly sugar growing location with irregular and unreliable sources of income, a strategy to improve household incomes was put in place by a graduate. Small livestock farming (fish, poultry, bee-keeping, dairy goats and others) was developed as alternative income sources for households while at the same time pressure was exerted through community associations for better terms and payments for sugarcane through the graduate's efforts. This type of community work was also taking place in Ainamoi, Thurdibuoro and a number of the other locations which had GORTA-sponsored graduates. Most graduates had translated their problem solving skills into practical actions with their families, relatives and community neighbours.

### **Motivation and Innovations**

From the discussions with the GORTA-sponsored graduates, most stated that the financial support they had received since graduation has boosted their morale when dealing with their clients. They noted that the skills and knowledge received in BAC has helped them motivate others. They mentioned that prior to joining BAC, they were not as committed to community issues as they are now. At Thurdibuoro location in Nyando district, one graduate had this to say: "*I do not regret having got support to go to BAC, I now see a future full of development and the community views me as their role model*". Unlike the time before joining the BAC course, the graduates said they could now access relevant information which helped their communities and themselves to progress and address disadvantages they face. However they still lamented the constraints that communities face in securing financial support for required inputs that would enable them feel their efforts were yielding results.

The graduates felt that the GORTA scholarship scheme has led to positive changes in their lives and in the lives of their immediate families. They had initiated profitable activities and themselves undertaken investments in a number of farming enterprises. One graduate from South Alego location had a bicycle repair business, another in Nambale location had an agro-vet shop and both cited some business training they had received after graduation as the main motivating factor. Equally, a number of the graduates interviewed said they were able to advise their parents, husbands or other relatives on how to be more economically self-reliant. Their biggest challenge, they pointed out, was inadequate financial resources to invest in 'right' ventures and sometimes limited transport facilities to engage communities in development.

### **Community Organisations**

It was envisaged that GORTA-supported students, on graduation, would help facilitate development and strengthening of community structures. Community organizations mentioned or noticed during the study are; women groups, CIGs (Common Interest Groups), co-operatives, credit schemes, youth groups and a number of welfare clubs. A number of members from these associations were asked questions about the value of the graduates to the work of their associations using a checklist developed for the study.

Two of the locations were considered for more detailed analysis. In Thurdibuoro and East Sakwa locations, where 12 members (10 groups) and 11 members (one group) participated in discussions, from each location respectively the results of discussion were as follows: 70 percent of members said they regularly attended meetings and belonged to at least one association, unlike before; 60 percent of the members said they were actively getting involved in decision-making for their local groups; and a number of those interviewed held some positions of leadership or had some responsibilities which they had assumed since the return of graduates to their areas. These results are corroborated by records of meetings they provided during the field study visits and the graduates' own accounts. For instance, the graduates in the 14 locations, with GORTA scheme, stated that their presence had "*rejuvenated groups and renewed the members' roles in these community organizations*". Interviews with three community facilitators of Thurdicep, a local CBO in Thurdibuoro location, emphasized these changes. The three confirmed the '*awakening of community groups*', which had helped greatly in their facilitation work.

As for the five control locations visited (i.e. areas where there was not a GORTA-sponsored graduate), the community members interviewed talked about agricultural activities only rather than more integrated developmental issues. This could be interpreted to imply a lower level of involvement in community issues related to associations or a weakness of graduates towards promoting more holistic approaches for community development. It was only in Katho location (one location among the five) where a semblance of active community participation was evident, and this was perhaps due to the graduate who was involved with a local NGO, called WINDOW.

In another location, Ollenguse (Uasin-Guishu district), without any past BAC graduate, the local administrator (Chief) said a number of organizations had been formed in the early days but were no longer active though the government of Kenya was creating an enabling environment for their development. This clearly points to some gaps in active community involvement in their organizations.

## **Role of Graduates**

Based on discussions with community members, it was felt that the GORTA-supported graduates had been active in establishing meetings towards the formation of community structures and in securing more people's involvement in local development activities. During the interviews, the communities' representatives stated that the graduates had enhanced awareness for the need and importance of good leadership. This contrasts with their fellow graduates (not GORTA-sponsored) in the other 'control' locations who seemed to be more comfortable working with individual farmers than with community groups. In Katho, which was one of control locations visited, the graduate there brought the researcher to individual contact farmers and there seemed to be little or no connection with the wider community.

From the discussions with community representative it became clear that collective actions were more common in areas where GORTA graduates were working compared to non-GORTA graduates areas. Some of the 'collective actions' noted in the latter communities were: tree nurseries; HIV-AIDS awareness projects; petty trading; common group financial contributions in a 'merry-go round' (members give contributions to one member to buy items and then when through with one project, they start again the contributions for another round of projects) and water projects, amongst others.

From the communities' own account, the GORTA-graduates were committed to and interested in the communities' activities. The communities' members interviewed said they were particularly encouraged by the ability of graduates to help them use local resources and develop their own ideas in their farming projects. They said the graduates were reliable and active even if not supervised, unlike locally-based civil servants working with government bodies in the area. The communities stated that the graduates had positive attitudes towards serving them. Importantly, most GORTA-graduates are in the forefront of forging community links with other service providers as witnessed in their localities during the study visits.

## **Effectiveness of the Scheme**

A participatory approach in identifying the potential candidates for this scheme was adopted by BAC. The target groups for this scholarship scheme were the needy individuals who had been involved in community work for some time and who had the required education and experience backgrounds. Results from this study indicated that this was adhered to. The majority of the graduates (95%) had the necessary Form IV education and fifty percent had the desired work exposure (i.e. had some involvement in community work) before joining BAC, while the other fifty did not. The study also showed that 93 percent of the graduates were nominated and selected by BAC staff in conjunction with community members. This community involvement in the selection process may have enabled the admission of appropriate candidates, though some of the graduates interviewed had reservations about the identification and selection process.

The fact that the selection process focused on community links was necessary as this enabled the majority of graduates to return to their communities after graduation (72% were working or living in their home areas). This is consistent with views expressed in literature; for instance, Muir-Leresche (2006) who noted that it was necessary to encourage entry of students with rural backgrounds, who are more likely to understand communities' needs, bring popular participation

and are prepared to go back to serve them after graduation. It also agrees well with the main objective of the scholarship scheme in developing individual enterprises and getting community development momentum going.

### **Funding and Partnership Arrangements**

GORTA funded the major expenses of the training but the nominees (graduates) and their communities had to pay some extra money, which was Kshs 15,000, as a condition of the scholarship compared to Kshs 80,000 which was value of grant for each student. BAC played a role in assisting the communities to access funds and training. As indicated in the literature (Muir-Leresche, 2006), tertiary institutions frequently face severe budgetary constraints and draw from populations that cannot pay the full costs of education.

Institutions therefore need to forge partnerships for the purpose of financing education. The extra amounts required were paid mainly by parents and relatives (62%) as shown in the results (Figure 2). This was contrary to GORTA-scholarship conditions that the benefiting community contributes the extra amounts. This may distort the commitment of the graduate returning to work with the community. However, for any training scholarship arrangement to be sustainable, it is highly preferable for beneficiaries themselves to contribute some part of costs for effectiveness. All the GORTA graduates (100%) found the scholarship valuable and especially paying of course fees as the study found out.

### **After Graduation Impact**

One of the objectives of the GORTA scheme was to allow the beneficiaries improve their capacities and develop into self-reliant individuals. Another was to enable the graduates facilitate empowerment of their communities. By then, just over 160 graduates had benefited from the scholarship since its inception. The study found that 92 percent of GORTA graduates were actively playing their role in their communities and 76 percent had initiated new individual enterprises. This clearly showed the effectiveness of the approach despite some few limitations.

### **Effects in the Community**

This section looks at the third specific objective which was to identify how the community needs were being met as a result of scholarship training facilitation to community members (GORTA supported graduates). A number these aspects are discussed under the headings of: community participation; community organization; and enterprise development.

#### ***Community Participation***

Participation of local community in the development process aims to strengthen their capacity and acquire responsibility for the authority over local resources as suggested in literature cited Binswanger (2000). Data from discussions and semi-structured interviews with community members, contained in their self-realization opinions, indicated that the quality of their involvement in various aspects of development had improved considerably since the return of graduates. Survey results showed that so far, the graduates' commitment to the affairs of their communities had increased their role in improving the quality of community participation. Ninety two percent of respondents said they were involved in community work; the majority of those (57%) being the GORTA-supported ones, who were active on the ground as observed during the visits. Due to this involvement, it was evident that there was increased confidence and

active participation of community members that opened new opportunities for development in their communities.

### ***Community Organizations***

One of the positive impacts of the GORTA-scholarship scheme was the way graduates had been able to promote development of community structures. They had also reinforced development activities of existing associations. This study indicated a significant number of communities engaged in running and management of local associations. A core purpose of any scholarship training programme is to empower communities to enable them manage their development process (Binswanger, 2000).

### ***Enterprise Development***

Communities and families of graduates had started more and new farm/business enterprises as deduced from the study. In practice, the GORTA-graduates had passed on the skills and knowledge gained from BAC, as evident from the thriving and several varied enterprises in place. As a result of this, community members had been able to access some of their requirements such as farm inputs and extra income. Other community members were able to purchase more livestock and expand existing enterprises. The starting of these enterprises was reported in the study findings as having had a great impact on livelihoods of beneficiaries (graduates and community members) of this scholarship. Likewise, from the study results, it appears that the enterprises assisted in addressing the development challenges faced in the areas where the scholarship graduates were working. As emphasized in literature cited earlier (CTA, 2002), social capital had been developed in the communities and had become a key element in improving services as well as enabling more focused development processes. The study has shown that the scholarship facilitated meeting the communities' needs in localities where it had operated over the years since its inception.

### **Conclusions**

The study found that most GORTA graduates were living or working within their communities and were actively facilitating them. Increased participation in community organizations was one concrete outcome of GORTA graduates facilitation. It was therefore concluded that the building of 'capable communities' had started taking shape where the graduates were involved. Community members are now organizing themselves and using local resources towards desired changes. As evident from this study, the greatest change that had occurred within communities, through the graduates' facilitation, had been the development of a sense of involvement, enthusiasm and ownership of the development process by local people themselves. Although this process was still on-going, together with emerging lessons, it was concluded that the scholarship scheme was playing a critical role in the community empowerment process. Frequent and properly coordinated follow-up of graduates from tertiary institutions is crucial to performance of graduates in their community facilitation. Training institutions should improve the follow-up otherwise it might continue holding back changes towards achieving tangible development progress in the communities.

The training support through BAC to needy communities contributed to empowerment of rural communities and developing of self-confidence and reliance among graduates in Kenya. Several community members have acquired skills through the facilitation of graduates. This is likely to

impact positively on livelihoods and ensure that the beneficiaries are addressing the challenges they face in their localities. However it was noted that students training alone did not lead to empowerment of communities. The control group (Non-GORTA graduates) indicated few signs of having changed the communities' ways of viewing development process. Training by itself may not bring the desired changes supporting local development. The GORTA / BAC approach of scholarship-partnership for training support to selected deserving communities demonstrated how financial support from donors could be used effectively to ameliorate rural problems and ensure that sustainable development is encouraged. The value of this approach was in its ability to create links with communities and past students to promote a people-driven development process. These links were instrumental in the successes attained so far. The approach puts a strong emphasis on the creation of partnerships to identify development opportunities and underlying constraints, as well as help drive forward and enhance training programme implementation.

It is therefore concluded from this study that the scholarship to community for training as an approach had achieved some significant outputs towards sustainable rural development. However, it was still necessary to improve aspects of such programmes as a prerequisite for higher performance of graduates and increased impacts.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

Some important implications from the scholarship training programme as highlighted from the study include:

- (i) involvement of communities in selection of potential candidates for any scholarship training arrangements, which may ensure commitment of graduates to return to communities after graduation;
- (ii) funding support to students from needy rural communities as a sure strategy towards engaging communities to realize their collective actions, which may have wider multiplier effect on society (different people in the communities even those not directly contacted had benefited);
- (iii) the existence of a potential for scholarship partnerships (such as the BAC/GORTA arrangement), which if well coordinated, could make a difference in the lives of individuals and indirect beneficiaries;
- (iv) support and follow-up after graduation, which should be an important aspect of any training/education partnership arrangements; and
- (v) the creation of graduates who show more commitment to their communities and are more likely to succeed although they require financial back-up.

From the study several recommendations are made in as far as training and learning institutions are concerned. Improvements could be made in the way the training approach is organized to make it more successful. The following are suggested as future interventions:

- (i) *A closer collaborative arrangement* - This should be built between the identified communities to develop suitable mechanisms for identifying 'right' candidates for scholarship support. Care must be taken when using local government administrators or community leaders who may be biased in nominating relatives;
- (ii) *Support after graduation* - Both back-up training and financial support for one year after graduation should be increased to allow graduates implement individual projects and

- respond to community needs. This can be done by institutions soliciting financial resources from potential partners and formulating relevant refresher training courses;
- (iii) *Promote lending scheme* - Training institutions should continue to encourage past students to organize themselves into credit and savings groups. They can link the members to donors so that funds can be channelled into such groups where graduates could access special loan facilities for initiating self-reliance ventures;
  - (iv) *Strengthen association for graduates* - Given challenges that graduates were facing in the field and in the absence of a dependable alumni structures, informal structures for Scholarship-supported graduates should be organized; and
  - (v) *Develop linkages* - Universities and Colleges should develop linkages with the private sector and industry for mutual benefit.

In as far as funding agencies are concerned; the GORTA support to disadvantaged and poorly resourced communities through BAC made progress and was valued by beneficiaries. In light of that and contributions it made in strengthening community empowerment it is suggested that;

- (i) Resources and support should be channelled through training institutions to improve the approach of resourcing graduates after completion of their training to ensure effectiveness in community facilitation process,
- (ii) Funding agencies should support BAC-type approaches. This will allow tertiary institutions meet the goal of strengthening the capacities of rural people, and
- (iii) Funds should be provided to well-organized past student associations to enable graduates provide loans to members so that they can start small business enterprises.

In as far as the involvement of communities and rural organizations in scholarship support programmes is concerned; it is recommended that they consider the following issues;

- (i) identify how best they can support the selected community members during and after training,
- (ii) be willing to accept the graduates' roles in facilitating the communities without having negative perceptions or unrealistic expectations,
- (iii) decide on the best way to interact with government agents or other service providers by developing links that are feasible.

In as far as Government and curriculum developers are concerned; they can encourage the development of education for rural change through greater support to rural training centres. In this regard, the following specific recommendations are made;

- (i) Support the replication of appropriate education policies for sustainable rural development,
- (ii) Encourage the adoption of education approaches that caters for life-long learning aimed at holistic development of beneficiaries,
- (iii) Consider funding certain aspects training institutions to encourage them develop into centres of excellence in rural development work.

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