



Trip Report: South Sudan Interview Visit

March 16 – 23, 2018

Nairobi, Kenya

By

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	3
I. Selection of Finalists for BHEARD South Sudan	4
Recruitment Strategies	4
Fields of emphasis for training	5
Interviews	5
Gender issues	5
II. Summary	6
Funding Available	6
Follow-up Steps	6
Additional Follow up in 2018.....	7
ANNEX A: Deliverables & Budget	8
Schedule of Deliverables, BHEARD	8
Estimated Budget	9
ANNEX B: Sample Call for Applications	10
Annex C: Ranked list of students interviewed	11
Annex D: Data on BHEARD Finalists	14
Annex E: Map showing geographical distribution of employment of candidates	15

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The Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Nairobi has provided outstanding assistance to BHEARD activities in Kenya. Two established faculty members volunteered to spend a very full 9 hour day Monday, on the BHEARD interview panel. Thank you to Dr. Gabriel Oluga Aboge and Dr. Fredrick Ayuke.

George Barack Otieno and Charles Odiyo made arrangements for the interviews to be held at Rosa Mystica Spiritual Center in Nairobi, which provided a warm welcome and housing for the group during the interview process.

Ann Hill in the BHEARD office worked hard to receive, follow up, and process all applications. These applications were reviewed and selected for interview by George Barack Otieno, Jessica Leigh, and Hope Kroll.



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Introduction

South Sudan became an active participant in BHEARD in 2014, under unusual circumstances. Due to changes in USAID/South Sudan’s priorities in the country in 2013, several programs were eliminated, and BHEARD was asked to continue with the management of training of a number of students who had already been placed into programs in the U.S. and South Africa under the discontinued RHEA project. Several additional students had been nominated for master’s and PhD studies, but had not yet been placed in universities. In May 2014, BHEARD took over management of these students.

Location of Study	# Students	Current Status	Managed By
Virginia Tech	4 PhD students, inherited from RHEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students will have returned home no later than May 17, 2018 • 2 completed their PhD degrees • 2 are in the final stages of preparing their defense and will complete in 2018 	Managed through subcontract with Virginia Tech
Virginia State Univ.	2 master’s students, inherited from RHEA	Both have completed degrees returned home	Were managed under Virginia Tech subcontract
South Africa	2 master’s students, inherited from RHEA	Both completed degrees. 1 applied and received BHEARD funding to pursue his PhD at Egerton University	Managed under Virginia Tech subcontract
Kenya	15 master’s students, plus 3 PhD students	2 MS students were dismissed for poor academic performance; 2 PhD and 3 MS students have completed. 13 others in progress toward their degrees and should complete by December 2019	Placed and managed directly through BHEARD
TOTALS	26 students (7 PhD and 19 master’s students)	4 PhD students have completed; 5 MS students have completed. 15 others in progress toward their degrees and should complete by December 2019	

The composition of the interview team was as follows:

- Hope Kroll, BHEARD Student Coordinator, Center for Global Connections
- Jessica Leigh, BHEARD Program Manager, Center for Global Connections
- George Barack Otieno, BHEARD East Africa Regional Coordinator
- Dr. Gabriel Oluga Aboge, Lecturer & Faculty Department of Public Health and Pharmacology, University of Nairobi
- Dr. Fredrick Ayuke, Senior Lecturer & Faculty Department of Land Resource Management and Agriculture Technology, University of Nairobi

I. Selection of Finalists for BHEARD South Sudan

Due to changes in relations between the U.S. and South Sudan, particularly in the area of sanctions, BHEARD was not able to support any new candidates for training. The 16 current South Sudanese students were all connected to South Sudanese universities, and under current U.S. policy, no further funds could support South Sudan government employees, including lecturers from government universities that had previously been collaborating partners with BHEARD. Since the BHEARD project is due to end in September 2021, this is the last year we can comfortably place MS students so that we are sure they will complete their studies within two years.

In 2017 with the help of Michael Smith, our Point of Contact for South Sudan in USAID/Washington, a proposal was made to allow BHEARD to resume recruitment of trainees from South Sudan, with the understanding that no government employees, including lecturers at government universities would be supported. The mission has agreed in 2018 to support master's students in training in the region.

Regional training has a number of benefits: not only are the costs much lower than U.S.-based training, there are additional benefits in studying in comparable agro-ecological zones with comparable crops. Kenya is a viable option, there are strong agricultural programs in universities such as Egerton and Nairobi. There are also a number of excellent international research organizations in Kenya which will provide additional research guidance and opportunities to our students. Finally, one of the overarching goals of BHEARD is to help scholars identify as change agents for their countries. The network model for students enables the program to provide opportunities for growing collaboration and institution-building among African institutions.

Recruitment Strategies

Since BHEARD could not work with the government universities that were our previous partners, we concentrated our efforts on the NGO sector, the private sector, and the one private university that focuses on agriculture, The Catholic University of South Sudan.

The following strategies were used:

- Posted the BHEARD advertisement on several NGO web sites, including the South Sudan NGO Forum, which included all the registered groups in the country.
- Conducted a web search to identify women's groups and women-focused NGOs, to get a higher number of women applicants than in the past.
- Contacted specific NGOs that deal with animal health and veterinary issues.



- Contacted the Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University of South Sudan to ask him to circulate our advertisement, which he was happy to do.
- Inquiries were made to all current and former BHEARD students from South Sudan to share the announcement with colleagues. The announcement was posted on both the BHEARD web site and Facebook page.

We received a total of 121 applications for this competition. Several were eliminated because they did not meet the criteria of the announcement (see Annex B).

Using rigorous selection criteria, we generated a list of 10 interviewees, 9 of which accepted and were able to participate in interviews. Criteria for selection of these candidates included:

- Academic records
- Research background and experience
- Area of study as related to USAID Feed the Future priorities and the agricultural priorities of the government of South Sudan
- A high level of written and spoken English
- Employment experience at a targeted institution in South Sudan, and indications of a commitment to serve the country in the future
- Gender
- Regional distribution of candidates within South Sudan

Fields of emphasis for training

- Animal or Livestock Sciences (including Animal Nutrition, Veterinary Science or Physiology)
- Horticulture
- Food Science and Nutrition
- Natural Resource Management (Soil, Water and Irrigation)
- Mechanization
- Plant Pathology
- Environmental Management and Climate Change

Interviews

Interviews were held in Nairobi, Kenya, due to travel restrictions from the DOS within South Sudan. As part of the interviews, candidates were given a comprehensive assessment of written their writing skills to gauge their ability to understand and summarize complex material in English. Additionally, they had to undergo a rigorous assessment of their technological skills to establish a baseline understanding of their ability to operate a computer and the related software.

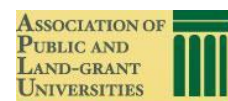
The interview process was conducted according to BHEARD procedures used in all interviews. Candidates were asked about their academic backgrounds, research experience and plans for the future, and how these plans fit into national and USAID priorities. When candidates expressed very general or broad areas of interest, the committee encourage them to focus ideas on more specific areas of study. Of particular interest to the committee was the commitment of the candidates to return to work in South Sudan following successful completion of their training.

Gender issues



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As in all BHEARD countries, we are very conscious of issues of gender, and make every effort to include as many women as possible in our trainees. To date, South Sudan has five female students out of a total of 17 trainees under the BHEARD program. As a general practice BHEARD contacts women scientists in the country, collaborating with the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) project, asking all our current BHEARD scholars to contact colleagues in their home countries, and by stressing to the partner institutions our eagerness to attract more women applicants. BHEARD also has offered female candidates a higher age limit to compensate for time spent in raising a family during the early stages of their careers. Of the three females who submitted complete applications that met the minimum standards for interview, one qualified for scholarship.

II. Summary

The interview committee found that five (5) candidates interviewed were likely to obtain admission to either the University of Nairobi or Egerton University, and those five (5) will be submitted to USAID/South Sudan for approval. The candidates were ranked based on the scores garnered from the highest to the lowest. It was the intention of the Program to pick the best five candidates from the ranking, the candidate at position five (Akol Garang Naih Peter) could not be eligible for admission in the Kenyan universities due to a weak grade (C-) while the least acceptable grade is a C+ on his high school records. As a result, the 6th candidate (Awuol Chol Peter) was instead selected as the 5th BHEARD trainee. In some cases, students were given guidance in their choice of subjects. For example, some wished to study Agricultural Economics, but they suggested that their academic backgrounds were not adequate for admission, and for their work in South Sudan, a master's in Agribusiness might be more suitable for them. Several candidates expressed interest in "sustainable agriculture," but this is not a stand-alone department, so the candidates were encouraged to select another department such as Horticulture.

Funding Available

USAID/South Sudan funding remaining in the budget for training is about \$300,000 at this time. Because BHEARD will be closing operations by September 30, 2021, this year is the last year available for new MS students to join the program and still graduate before 2021. BHEARD does not expect any additional funding from the mission.

Follow-up Steps

- All nominees will be submitted to USAID/South Sudan for approval.
- George Otieno will work with the University of Nairobi and Egerton University to finalize admission letters for the candidates.
- The Government of Kenya must also check on the undergraduate universities attended; if a university is not on the approved list, the candidate will not be eligible for admission to a Kenyan institution. Candidates' high school and primary school records must also be examined for equivalency to Kenyan requirements.
- George Otieno will organize housing, immigration requirements, etc. for admitted applicants.
- The BHEARD office will enter documentation for all admitted students in TraiNet.
- BHEARD will work with Egerton University and the University of Nairobi to provide an orientation program for the newly-arrived students in early September to introduce them to the Kenyan system of post-graduate education, study skills, suggestions for success, etc.

Additional Follow up in 2018

BHEARD has previously provided a conference for students training in the U.S. in either Washington, D.C. or East Lansing, Michigan; and a conference for Regional students in Kenya. In fall 2018, BHEARD will have a conference for all our students (Regional and U.S.), including alumni (over 200). This will provide our students an opportunity to interact with peers from other countries and disciplines. This conference will be held in the September or October in or around Nairobi, Kenya. As BHEARD students in Kenya, the South Sudanese will participate in this conference in 2018. All costs will be covered through additional BHEARD funding not associated with the support of their studies. In 2017, a conference on improving scientific writing was presented. In 2016, a conference on leadership training was presented.

In August 2018 when students arrive in Kenya, an orientation program will be established for them. This will include completing all required USAID/BHEARD paperwork, tours of campus, virtual introductions of the BHERD team, and a detailed review of the BHEARD Regional Student Handbook. Our goal is to make sure all students have an equal and appropriate support to ensure successful completion of their studies and the BHEARD program.



ANNEX A: Deliverables & Budget

Schedule of Deliverables, BHEARD

Time line	Deliverables
November 2017	Work with USAID mission to design an approved Call for Applications; list of target institutions and fields of study. Circulate Call for Applications as widely as possible.
January 1, 2018	Deadline for receipt of applications
February 2018	Review of applications, creation of short list for interviews; creation of local selection committee; decide on venue for March interviews
March 2018	Interviews held in Juba or Nairobi; English language test administered to finalists
April 2018	Finalists begin application process to regional universities of their choice
March – April 2018	Results of applications announced.
June 2018	Admitted students work with East Africa Regional Coordinator on immigration and travel issues.
August or early September, 2018	Admitted students travel to Kenya. Classes begin.
July 2019	Students will begin thesis research, all research will be conducted in Kenya due to security concerns in South Sudan.
September 2019 (estimated)	M.S. students will begin data analysis and writing of thesis.
August 2020 (estimated)	Defense of thesis, return to South Sudan

Estimated Budget

Items	Unit Cost	Trainees	Total
Tuition, books, laptop, accommodation, living allowance, travel to country of study, health insurance, research expenses, etc. for 2-year master's degree	\$45,000	5	\$225,000

Budget Estimate for South Sudan MS Training BHEARD Program - Cohort 6

Approximate cost for 2 year training program

Training Line	Unit	Expense	Total
Tuition Fee	1	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Laptop Allowance	1	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Software Allowance	1	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Books and Supplies Allowance	2	\$ 950.00	\$ 1,900.00
Living Allowance - Monthly (should only need 24 months)	30	\$ 550.00	\$ 16,500.00
Accommodation - Housing	24	\$ 500.00	\$ 12,000.00
Air Travel - Arrival in Kenya for Training and Return Home After Completion	2	\$ 350.00	\$ 700.00
Health Insurance	1	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00
Research Allowance	1	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
Total Estimated Expense Per Trainee			\$ 42,700.00

ANNEX B: Sample Call for Applications



Announcement of Scholarship Opportunities Under the Borlaug Higher Education for Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) Program

Under its Feed the Future initiative, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has instituted the Borlaug Higher Education Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) Program. Implemented by Michigan State University (MSU), the BHEARD program honors the legacy of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug. The program will support long-term training of agricultural and food security researchers and policy advisors at the master's and doctoral levels. This is a major effort to increase the number of agricultural scientists and policy advisors and strengthen scientific institutions in developing countries.

South Sudan has been selected as one of eleven countries for scholarship support under the BHEARD program. The scholarships will support master's study at regional universities in Africa, beginning in August 2018. Training programs will cover up to two years of courses and research for master's students. Studies will be undertaken at a regional university, such as in Kenya or South Africa.

Applications are invited from South Sudanese students who meet the requirements below. Preference will be given to employees whose work involves agriculture with organizations such as:

- non-governmental organizations (NGOs),
- private sector institutions
- private university academic staff

Applicants may study any field of agriculture that relates to food security in South Sudan. These fields may include crops, soils, agricultural economics, food science and nutrition, post-harvest technology, and agricultural extension.

The Trainee Selection Committee will review applications and select candidates based on the following criteria:

1. South Sudanese national residing in South Sudan.
2. Strong academic performance at the Bachelor's level (first or upper second class pass). Relevant educational background and professional experience.
3. Strong written and spoken English language skills.
4. Evidence of commitment to a future career in developing agriculture in South Sudan.
5. Under 32 years of age for master's applicants. An exception may be made for female candidates up to 38 years of age.

****Qualified female candidates are especially encouraged to apply.****

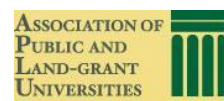
HOW TO APPLY: Read the instructions on the web site below, and send all scanned documents by email to BHEARDAPPLY@anr.msu.edu.

OR

Apply online through our application portal <http://msu-bheard.terradotta.com/?go=SouthSudan2018>

If you are unable to create an online application, you may use the attached application below and email your application documents to BHEARDAPPLY@anr.msu.edu. Due to the high volume of applications, it may take 4-5 weeks to process your application.

The application deadline is January 1, 2018.



Annex C: Ranked list of students interviewed

RANKING

	Scores by panel					AVERAGE SCORE	RANKING
	George Otieno	Gabriel Aboge	Fredrick Ayuke	Jessica Leigh	Hope Kroll		
Interviewee							
Lungaju Stephen Edward	32	33	34	34	38	34.20	4
Awuol Chol Peter	32	30	33	33	30	31.60	6
Saad Sarah Juma Suleiman	17	24	22	13	12	17.60	9
Olla Ogweta Ongee Milton	27	23	-	23	21	23.50	8
Majok Chol Dan Abot	35	36	36	41	38	37.20	1
Magot Michael Achiek	30	33	32	42	42	35.80	2
Kitale Estella John Kasiano	33	38	35	34	38	35.60	3
Duku Linda Thomas	19	19	20	33	30	24.20	7
Akol Garang Naih Peter	26	36	-	33	35	32.50	5

Males: 6; Females: 3; Total: 9

RANKINGS & COMMENTS FROM PANEL

Interviewee	Rank	Panel comments	Recommendation
Majok Chol Dan Abot	1	Bsc Agriculture (University of Eldoret) 2 nd Upper Primary (KCPE) certificate available Secondary (KCSE) certificate available No experience in research Well spoken English Demonstrated ability to undertake graduate studies Consistent and assertive in academic area of interest Interprets questions asked with ease and creative in responses provided	Process admission into BHEARD Program
Magot Michael Achiek	2	Bsc Economics (Univ. of Juba) Division 2 Primary school certificate (PLE) available Secondary school certificate(Sudan secondary School Certificate) Good understanding of the current food security challenges in the country Is clear and consistent on academic pathway including research areas of interest Not familiar with the term “academic integrity” Good communication skills including well spoken English language	Process admission into BHEARD Program

Kitale Estella John Kasiano	3	Bsc Vet. Sciences(Univ. of Bahr el Ghazal) Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education(UACE) Uganda Certificate of Education(UCE) Primary Leaving Certificate (PLC) Consistent in responses with good communication skills including well spoken English. Is conversant with national food priorities Strong grades in high school and university	Process admission into BHEARD Program
Lungaju Stephen Edward	4	Bsc Crop Protection (Upper Nile Univ.) Class 2 Div I Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) Primary Leaving Certificate (PLC) Potential to undertake graduate studies under good mentoring Conversant with subject of interest at graduate studies level Good communication skills with well-spoken English Good understanding of government food security priorities Good explanation of project undertaken at undergraduate level – description shows intelligence, creativity and passion for assignments given	Process admission into BHEARD Program
Akol Garang Naih Peter	5	Bsc Crop Protection Class 1 (CGPA 3.59) No primary school certificate High school score C- (C minus). This grade is not admissible in the Kenyan university system. Good spoken English Focused on area of research/interest. Good performance in oral interview	Do not process further. Lack of acceptable high school grade will not allow process to continue
Awuol Chol Peter	6	Bsc Agricultural Sciences (Univ. of Juba) Class 2 Div I Demonstrated capacity to take up higher challenges if properly mentored Good command of English Good communication skills	Process admission into BHEARD Program
Olla Ogweta Ongee Milton	7	Bsc Crop Production (Upper Nile University) Class 1 with CGPA 3.78 Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education(UACE) Uganda Certificate of Education(UCE) Has participated in field experiments/trials Fairly good spoken English Work experience less than 2 years Needs extra support to comfortably undertake graduate studies Poor focus – not sure of his area of interest in research at graduate studies level	Do not process further. Not among the best 5 interviewees

Saad Sarah Juma Suleiman	8	Bsc Vet. Medicine (Upper Nile University) Class 2 Div I Primary school certificate – Sudan Secondary school certificate – Sudan Very slow in interpreting questions Capacity to undertake graduate studies very low including below average communication skills and poor spoken English	Do not process further. Not among the best 5 interviewees
Duku Linda Thomas	9	Bsc Crop Production Class 2 Division 1(Upper Nile University) No primary and high school certificates Communication challenge due to previous language of instruction in school (Arabic).Poor spoken English. As a result interpretation of questions/instructions a big challenge. University grades average. Likely to have challenges in undertaking graduate studies unless provided additional English lessons. Average score in oral interviews below satisfactory	Do not process further. Not among the best 5 interviewees

Annex D: Data on BHEARD Finalists

First Name	Last Name	Gender	Subject Area	Employer	City
Garang	Akol	Male	Entomology (including IPM)	Global CST LTD	Torit
Chol	Awuol	Male	Agronomy or Crop Science (including Crop Physiology)	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	Juba
Linda	Duku	Female	Agronomy or Crop Science (including Crop Physiology)	Catholic University of South Sudan, Juba	Wau
Kitale	Kasiano	Female	Animal or Livestock Sciences (including Animal Nutrition, Veterinary Science, or Physiology)	Norwegian Refugee Council	Juba
Michael	Magot	Male	Agricultural Economics or Agribusiness (including Agricultural Statistics, Data Analysis or Policy Planning)	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)	Juba
Dan	Majok	Male	Agricultural Economics or Agribusiness (including Agricultural Statistics, Data Analysis or Policy Planning)	CRS-South Sudan	Juba
Ogweta	Olla	Male	Agronomy or Crop Science (including Crop Physiology)	BRAC International	
Sarah	Saad	Female	Animal or Livestock Sciences (including Animal Nutrition, Veterinary Science, or Physiology)	Kwajok Tongun ladu	Juba
Stephen Edward	Samuel	Male	Entomology (including IPM)	ADRA South Sudan	Juba

Annex E: Map showing geographical distribution of employment of candidates

