

Institution: Queen's University Belfast
Unit of Assessment: 19
Title of case study: Enhancing social and environmental entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Complementary strands of research, including the 'Trickle Out Africa' (TOA) Economic and Social Research Council project based in Queen's University Management School, has significantly increased awareness and understanding of social and environmental (SE) enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is critical to achieving sustainable development and poverty alleviation. The research, by Principal Investigator Dr Diane Holt, has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • influenced stakeholder awareness of SE enterprises in the region; • provided opportunities for SE enterprises to promote their services globally; • facilitated knowledge exchange, knowledge transfer and capacity building between practitioners, NGOs, development agencies, charities, governments, communities and civil society on social and environmental entrepreneurship in Southern and Eastern Africa; and • facilitated greater understanding by policy makers and practitioners of the role of SE enterprises in poverty alleviation and sustainable development.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Since 2007, Holt's research has focused on the integration of social and environmental concerns with sustainable development strategies. There are two complementary strands to this research.</p> <p>The first is her work on public debate and policy dialogue about the difficulties integrating social and environmental goals into sustainable development strategies in the developed and developing world. She initially explored this area in a study of the fair trade flower industry in Kenya (3.1), highlighting the tensions in achieving both social and environmental goals when sourcing from developing countries. This was also explored in collaboration with the 'Trends in Sustainability' project led by Barkemeyer (Leeds) and Figge (Marseilles), (both based in Queen's University Management School from 2007 to 2010) (3.4). This research highlighted the emerging nature of social and environmental discourse in the developing world and how this varies across nations and in different contexts.</p> <p>The second strand of her research examined how social and environmental concerns interface with new business formation to promote sustainable development. This research originated in a study of green micro-enterprises in the USA (3.2, 3.3) supported by a Nuffield small grant in 2009 (3.6). The findings revealed that, although the founders of these enterprises had clear 'for profit' motives, they continually traded off economic impacts to gain social value (3.6) as they sought to straddle traditional boundaries between 'profit' and 'not-for-profit' organisations. Further research also suggested that these trade-offs and blurred boundaries between social and environmental businesses were emerging in Africa (3.1, 3.4).</p> <p>An interesting finding from the research in Africa was the absence of systematic information about 'social purpose' and environmentally-orientated for-profit enterprises, such as those involved in fair trade, the organic food industry or renewable energy technologies (3.1). It also found that there was little informed discussion about the role SE enterprises could play in wider economic development, and the nature of SE enterprises in terms of the balance between environmental and social goals, especially in developing countries.</p> <p>A feature of both research strands was how they highlighted the role SE entrepreneurs and their organisations could play in sustainable development. This important finding led to the development of the £279,962 TOA project (3.5), which explores the role of social and environmental enterprises play in poverty alleviation and sustainable development across Southern and Eastern Africa. The outputs arising from the TOA project have resulted in wide-ranging academic, social and economic impacts on a variety of stakeholders.</p> <p>Recognising the need for an integrated source of information for SE enterprises in Africa (3.1), Holt developed a legacy resource in the shape of a database on social purpose ventures in the 19</p>

countries of Southern and Eastern Africa, which would contain relevant information to facilitate her own research, and provide a public information source on the activities of these businesses (3.5). This web-based directory of SE businesses, and associated support agencies, cooperatives and individual entrepreneurs across the 19 countries went online in November 2011. The website is available in Afrikaans, Swahili, French, Portuguese and English. It is the only site and directory of its kind, offering a free knowledge exchange platform for potential donors, customers, supporters and policy makers. The SE enterprises listed in the directory were identified by scanning donor reports, websites, case studies, and research papers. Self-registration has also enabled organisations to list themselves. There are now almost 4,000 such organisations listed. More detailed data, including information on funding sources, strategic decision-making, pricing, mission focus, location, target audience, and start-up was also collected using an online survey tool. The site represents a unique dataset that informs policy and practice, with significant implications for improving understanding of the nature and variety of social and environmental enterprises.

The research for TOA also involved 24 weeks of fieldwork (November- December 2011, March-June 2012) exploring SE enterprises in Zambia, Kenya, South Africa and Mozambique. Twenty case studies were explored as a result of this fieldwork, with detailed case analysis providing detailed maps of the impact of these organisations on sustainable development and poverty alleviation. These maps and associated case studies not only present an innovative assessment of how these organisations can further improve, but also make a valuable contribution to the development of a more rigorous impact evaluation methodology to assess organisational and policy performance in the SE sector.

3. References to the research

3.1 Holt, D. and Watson, A. (2008), Exploring the dilemma of local sourcing versus international development – the case of the flower industry, *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 17(5), pp. 318 – 329

3.2 Holt, D. (2011), Where are they now? Tracking the longitudinal evolution of environmental businesses from the 1990s. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 20, pp. 238-250.

3.3 Holt, D. (2012), The Journey of a 'Green' Micro-Enterprise –The Green Planet. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 19(2), pp. 90-101.

3.4 Barkemeyer, R., Figge, F., and Holt, D. (2013) Exploring sustainability-related media coverage and human development. *Environment and Planning C* 31(4), pp. 716-74

3.5 2011: ESRC First Grant (£279,962) Trickle Up? A study of eco/social enterprises in Southern and Eastern Africa and their role in sustainable development at the bottom of the pyramid. Grant Holder and PI: Dr Holt (02/2011- 03/2013)

3.6 2009: Nuffield Small Grant (£7,438) What future for green small businesses? Tracking the longitudinal evolution of ecopreneurial businesses from the 1990's. Grant Holder and PI: Dr Holt (10/2009-09/2010)

4. Details of the impact

The academic, social and economic impacts of this research can be clustered under four themes.

1. Influencing stakeholder awareness of SE enterprises in the region

Holt's research activities have had a significant impact by building awareness of African SE enterprises through the website, media coverage, stakeholder events, academic conferences and publications.

The website and directory demonstrate significant reach, securing 4.3 million hits, almost 530,000 unique visitors, and 1.9 million page views from May 2012 to April 2013. Some 71.4 million bytes of information on SE enterprises were accessed during this period.

Positive press and social media coverage of the research on SE enterprises in Africa and their role in sustainable development has also built awareness, as evidenced by over 20 newspaper articles, online articles, blog posts and radio interviews.

Examples include an article in the *Answers from the Big Issue* e-magazine (No 1 Sept 2012)

showcasing social innovation, which said: "The Trickle Out team believes that it is crucial that we do not just import business models and preconceptions from a western, developed world context into Africa. Work so far has shown that the social enterprises emerging in Africa are perhaps very different to what we call a social enterprise in the UK...Many of the social enterprises Trickle Out is finding are at a much more informal stage but they are potentially impacting thousands."

The *Guardian* (October 2011) and *Next Billion* blogs (Sept 2011) stated: "Africa may seem to be a bit lost on the inclusive-market-social-entrepreneurship-map sometimes. Most big microfinance funds have only small portfolios in the area, and it often feels like the BIG success stories cited in case studies or making the pages of The Wall Street Journal are from India. But there's A LOT going on. A team from Queen's University Belfast has set out to find out how much, what, and where – and make their insights public in a Social and Environmental Enterprise Directory....."

The importance of the directory was also noted in 2011 by the Director of the British Council, Kenya who said: "Putting together a directory of all the social and environmental enterprises, or at least as many as they can find, will be an enormously valuable exercise and should build up innovation and enterprise, not just within Kenya and other countries but across them too.."

2. Providing opportunities for listed SE enterprises to promote their services globally

The TOA website and directory both increases awareness of specific organisations listed and provides opportunities for them to reach the market and showcase their activities. For instance, Cookswell Enterprises in Kenya, which markets and sells innovative energy-saving charcoal and wood-fuelled stoves and ovens, were recently short-listed as finalists for the prestigious Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy. These prizes are awarded for sustainable energy projects that protect the environment and improve quality of life. Cookswell reported to the Trickle Out project: "Thanks to your awesome coverage of what we are doing, these people thought to short-list us for a small award".

The high levels of hits on the website and individual page views illustrate that many individuals are seeking information on these specific SE enterprises. There is evidence that this offers listed enterprises possible market opportunities. For example, a potential investor said: "I came across your website while researching a new business venture. I am starting up a company ... very much like those produced by some of the companies featured on your website. Yours is the most useful I have found so far and I certainly hope to be contacting some of the suppliers".

3) Promoting knowledge exchange, transfer and capacity building for social and environmental entrepreneurship

Knowledge exchange and transfer activities have included a capacity building workshop for Africa researchers, evening events for policymakers and practitioners, conference papers, online dissemination of early findings, and public lectures in South Africa, Kenya and the UK.

Feedback from the participants from the capacity-building training workshop for entrepreneurship researchers from Malawi, Zambia, Kenya and Southern Africa (April 2012) suggest significant impacts on knowledge and facilitating networking:

"The workshop was really insightful; it drew my attention to the concept of social entrepreneurship. Plus it was good to meet with other researchers and network" (participant from University of Lusaka, Zambia). "The Workshop was so valuable and an eye opener to social enterprise research" (participant from Moi University).

One of the participants subsequently attended a meeting with the regulatory body for universities in Kenya, where they suggested that social entrepreneurship should be taught at MBA level (participant from University of Nairobi). Two of the participants (Zambia and South Africa) have linked up in a south-south network to submit a grant proposal. A Kenyan academic participant from Bondo University College also noted "the experience I gained was enormous as I was able to create linkages and network".

Holt also ran an entrepreneurship master class on entrepreneurship and economic development in April 2012, in association with the workshop attended by 70 members of the Kenyan business community and government. A keynote speech was reviewed by Dr Manu Chandaria, a leading Kenyan industrialist.

4) Facilitating greater understanding amongst policy makers and practitioners of the impact SE enterprises can have on poverty alleviation and sustainable development

Holt has also published a series of case studies based on the analysis of the fieldwork data on poverty alleviation impacts. This dissemination of conceptual insights on poverty alleviation and sustainable development accruing from SE enterprises in Africa is ongoing, but early evidence is suggesting that they are having an impact.

One of the organisations profiled is the Book Bus, which has highlighted how the project is helping to shape its future strategic direction. "It (the detailed case analysis) identifies our key strengths and obvious weaknesses... There is much for us to do in increasing our educational impact, some of which we will address with the workshops and teaching scheme listed... Your conclusions will be a very useful reference, especially when fine-tuning our business plan and for future funding applications..."

Holt's research is also informing policy and practice amongst practitioner organisations, especially in partnership with the South African based NGO, the African Social Entrepreneurs Network (ASEN), which is using the TOA data to inform their presentations to the World Social Enterprise Forum. They recently presented their assessment of the training needs of Southern African social entrepreneurs and their practical response to this, informed by the data collected by TOA which was shared with them.

The impact of Holt's research was recognised when she was shortlisted as a finalist for the 'All Party Group for International Development Awards' in the category of 'Outstanding Academic Study in Development'. Holt and the Trickle Out Africa research project received an 'Honourable Mention' at the awards ceremony held at Stormont on May 23rd 2013.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Selected emails corroborating impact of the cited research in the case study on opportunities for SE practitioners and knowledge exchange and capacity building in relation to SEs

5.2 Data on website use and downloads corroborating impact of the cited research in the case study on showcasing SEs to increase global opportunities and awareness building on SEs in Africa generally .

5.3 Feedback from capacity building workshop in Nairobi (April 2012) corroborating impact of the cited research in the case study on capacity building and knowledge transfer

5.4 Media and social media coverage corroborating impact on building awareness of SEs in Africa by media and stakeholders

5.5 "Support Needs of South African Social Entrepreneurs". Business of Social and Environmental Innovation Conference, University of Cape Town, Oct 2012 (corroborating impact of the cited research in the case study on building awareness of SEs in Africa

5.6 Video of launch of TOA project at British Council offices in Nairobi in 2011 (corroborating impact of the cited research in the case study on building awareness of SEs in Africa)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ow0HmeoFEMs&feature=relmfu> Launch

5.7 Video of public lecture in UK June 2012 at Queen's University Belfast (corroborating impact of the cited research in the case study on building awareness of SEs in Africa

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6NLm2MfW4M&feature=relmfu> Public Lecture

5.8 Event at British Institute of East Africa, Nairobi Kenya April 2012 (corroborating impact of the cited research in the case study on detailed knowledge exchange and capacity building :

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDmhE-uxnqk> Master Class – Chandaria.