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Master Research Paper:
Social enterprises and government relationships in the agricultural sector of Sub-Saharan
Africa

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1 Introduction

For many years, international development projects have been put forward by western countries' development agencies in developing countries, through partnerships with non-governmental organizations. Despite an evolution in the way those projects were implemented, there is still a lot to be done regarding poverty reduction and ensuring that basic needs are met for most of the world's population. Governments from developed countries are investing billions of dollars in different fields of traditional development projects such as health, education, economic growth, food security, governance, etc. In order to keep making effective and efficient investments, international donors need to re-evaluate their options and consider partnering with other actors as a way to leverage additional funding and achieve the SDGs. NGOs and multilateral organizations have been considered to be the main actors in the field for many years. Donor governments have recently begun to consider the private sector as a potential partner. Although contested, a subset of the literature on development has demonstrated that the private sector can foster development, mainly economic development, and could therefore be a good partner for development agencies to achieve their objectives.

Since the private sector has a limited understanding of the challenges faced by developing countries population and as their main goal is to make profit, they might not be the best suited to help governments in reducing inequality and providing fair access to basic products and services such as education, food, healthcare, finance, etc. However, the possibility of seeing such partnership happening isn't completely impossible as the private sector has seen a new business model emerged in the past decades: the social enterprise business. This business model seems promising and might be a better partnership alternative for donors as these businesses' main purpose is to have a social impact on the community they are serving and provide them with products and services that meet the particular needs, with a less important desire to make large profit. Although, scholars have been talking about social enterprises in the western hemisphere for quite a while, the emergence of such business model in other parts of the world is quite new, therefore, little research has been conducted on social enterprises impacts and on their potential for partnerships with governments, especially in developing countries.

This current research aims to analyze the main characteristics of social enterprises in the agricultural sector of Sub-Saharan Africa and their relationship with host-country governments and other foreign/donors' governments, in order to develop a deeper understanding of their relationship in the agricultural sector. The sector was chosen since more than 60% of people in Sub-Saharan Africa rely on agriculture to survive (Goedde, Ooko-Ombaka & Pais, 2019, Online) and a better productivity in the sector could help to alleviate poverty. By presenting two case studies, the research will aim to answer the following question: do social enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa correspond to the literature's expectations about social enterprises ?; What are the main characteristics of host-country and foreign governments relationship with social enterprises (SE) in the sector ?; Are there any differences between the two case studies and if so what could potentially explain these differences? The main hypothesis is that SEs and host-country governments have a close relationship as they both want to reduce poverty, and that SEs and donors have a relationship solely based on funding provision.

In order to discuss the previous questions, the following sections will outline the ongoing situation by providing an overview of the literature concerning the main components of SEs which are related to the hybrid nature of these organizations and the importance of context, followed by an overview of the literature in regard to the relationship host-countries and foreign governments have with social enterprises. The second section will be followed by a section presenting two case studies: *Hello Tractor* and *Kickstart International inc.*, two social enterprises conducting their activities in the agricultural sector of Sub-Saharan Africa. Each case will be introduced within a specific context in order to have a better understanding of their impact and their relationship with governments. As for the third section, it will be dedicated at analyzing the current state of the relationship provided by the two case studies and therefore answer the questions presented earlier, to either validate or invalidate the hypothesis.

In terms of methodology, this MRP is based on a review of secondary sources. The sources of information chosen will principally be peer-reviewed and from reputable scientific journal or organization. However, the scarcity of academic treatments of the cases, means

that information used also comes from specialized news journals as well as the official websites of social enterprises.

2 Literature Review

Before diving into the core of this essay, the first part of this paper will lay the foundations for a better understanding of the comparative analysis of the two case studies that will be presented in the second part of this essay. This chapter will offer a literature review of the concept of social enterprise by offering a description of the concept as well as the current academic debate regarding the definition. It will then be followed by the presentation of the relationship dynamics between SEs, host-country governments and international donors. This section will allow the reader to have a better understanding of what the literature is saying in terms of the main characteristics of SEs and governments relationships and give the required knowledge to understand the following sections in regard to the case studies and their analysis.

2.1 Definition and Conceptualization of Social Businesses

The literature about social enterprises (SE) is large and authors around the world discuss the concept from different perspectives. The concept of SE has gained more attention in the past decade following the growing concern about the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and since 2015 the SDGs. SEs are now presented as a way to bridge the funding gap between governments financial support and what is actually needed for the SDGs to be achieved annually (Convergence, Online), a gap that has grown to \$1.5 trillion USD (Petter Utting, 2018: 1). As mentioned, the literature around SEs grew in the last few years, and one particular scholar, J. Gregory Dees, gave more attention to the concept than others. Although Dees didn't introduce the concept of social enterprise into the literature, he remains one of the most cited authors within the literature. His article explains the concept of social enterprise and its components, as well as the difficulty for SEs to balance their priorities without losing sight of their mission (Dees, 1998). The article didn't provide a definition of the concept, however, he emphasized the fact that social enterprises are hybrid organizations, therefore having non-profit components such as a philanthropic

mission and for-profit characteristics, therefore generating revenues and profits (Fowler, 2000: 647; Ramatse & Shah, 2012: 1). Moreover, Dees also shows that SEs exist along a spectrum, regarding how they position themselves in terms of their motives and their stakeholder's relationships and thus determine where they situate themselves in relations with for-profit and non-profit (Dees, 1998: 59).

2.1.1 Hybridity

The concept of hybridity introduced by Dees under the SEs' characterization of mixed organizations, was pushed forward and further developed by Doherty & *al.* (2014). In their article, they explain, that social enterprises are hybrids since they have a business-inspired approach as they pursue financial sustainability as well as social objectives such as reducing poverty, alleviate hunger, reducing inequalities and even more (Doherty et *al.* 2014, 420). Both of these characteristics are the reason why SEs are considered hybrid organization.

As a result of this hybridity and the possibility for SEs to include and balance both components as they wish, the literature does not offer a common definition of what a SE consists. Effectively, because the extent of for-profit versus non-profit characteristics can vary quite a bit between different SEs, thus the creation of a scale by Dees (1998: 59), the establishment of a common definition of SEs among scholars is difficult. However, SEs' hybridity, hence the social objective and the business management mindset, seem to be recognized by many authors in the field, even if not explicitly mentioned as such (Zahra & *al.*, 2009: 519-522; Austin & *al.*, 2006: 2; Gupta and Beninger, 2002: 91). Nonetheless, some authors in the field criticize the use of hybridity to qualify SEs. Effectively, Santos argues, in his article, that the dichotomy between social and economic is problematic as such hybridity isolates social value and economic value, where they are in reality interrelated. Moreover, he adds that by using the dichotomy the economic value is easily measurable compared to the social value (Santos, 2012: 337).

On another note, it is important to underline that the combination of these two goals is not without any problem, as enterprises have to decide which of those goals to put as a priority. Effectively, it is important to consider that by extending the boundaries of the private

sector, to the public and the non-profit sectors, SEs are bridging different fields which can lead to a conflicting logic within the same institution (Doherty & *al.*, 2014: 418). Therefore, every enterprise is unique as it will create a balance between both objectives that is best for them (Doherty *et al.*, 2014, p. 425). As the balance can be difficult to make and to sustain, it can have an impact on the type of relationships SEs will have with other development actors. Effectively, it can give a false feeling of flexibility for donors' intervention, which can affect donors' accountability towards taxpayers in terms of explaining and framing their intervention (Rogerson & *al.*, 2015: VII). However, the difficulty of balancing both financial aims and social objectives is not the only critic addressed toward those entities. As stated by some authors, social enterprises have not really lead to tangible social change by changing systemic social problems that they pretend to address (Ganz M., Kay T. & Spicer J., 2018: 60).

The numerous definitions as well as the hybridity of SEs add complexity to the concept as different understanding of social enterprises and the balance of its main components are put forward (Rivera-Santos, M. *et al.*, 2015, p. 2). Therefore, it leads to a more subjective qualification of social enterprises, based on an individual perception. As it relies on perception, the definition can be influenced by the contextual environment in which a specific SE conducts its activities.

2.1.2 *The importance of context*

As highlighted, the environment in which a social enterprise is created and based is a key determinant in understanding the extent of its activities and the logic behind it (Rivera-Santos, M. *et al.*, 2015: 73; Warnecke, T., & Houndonougbo N. A., 2016: 367-370; Gupta, S. & Beninger S., 2015: 92). In some cases, the context in which a SE emerges will influence the qualification of the organization as being a social enterprise or not. According to Rivera-Santos & *al.*, the attribution of the "social enterprise" title to a business can result of self-perception from social entrepreneurs themselves and be specific to their understanding of the situation in which the business is located (2015: 2). Although the use of self-perception in defining what is or isn't a SE (1998: 337) is criticized by Santos, he introduced an important component in the understanding of SE creation.

Effectively, Santos argues that the environment in which SEs are created in, or are created for, is important as this specific context is characterized by specific challenges that will then create social needs that SEs will be trying to answer (Santos, 2012). This statement has been endorsed by many authors in the literature and most of them also highlighted that social enterprises are, in most cases, created to fill a gap that exists within a specific sector of the society in which they are located. Santos defines this gap by underlining that governments and markets failure to provide a service or a product to a population will create the appropriate environment for a social business to emerge and therefore fill the gap (2012: 343). Dacin & *al.* take the same avenue as Santos by advancing that in an environment where there are considerable environmental, socioeconomic and cultural problems, social entrepreneurship is more likely to happen (2010: 50). The social entrepreneurship literature put a lot of emphasize on the proliferation of problems around the world, such as extreme poverty, and the inability of governments to tackle them all efficiently (Galvin & Iannotti, 2015: 425). There is therefore, in situations where these problems are encountered, a need for social enterprises to emerge and fill the gap that governments or markets aren't able to fill. In addition to creating the need for SEs, market failure, social problems and extreme poverty a will also draw other international donors to offer support to SEs contributing to reducing the effect of those challenges on society, as it is part of the usual rationale behind government support to SEs (Rogerson & *al.*, 2015: 4-5).

In addition, it is also important to recognize that the situation in which a SE emerged also has the possibility to influence its relationships with international development donors. As each situation has its particular challenges and complexities, donors' rationale for intervention or non-intervention will be guided by the type of challenges faced. These challenges will then allow the donor to evaluate its willingness to offer funding to the SE in regard to its priorities, its capacity to face these problems and if so, to choose the appropriate response (Rogerson & *al.*, 2015: 3-7). Although, it is also important to mention that in some cases SEs emerged as a result of the organization financial needs, specifically in cases where there was an obvious lack of funding from governments for their development initiatives. Effectively, several SEs were created as are a result of the limited

funding availability for NGOs both nationally and internationally which forces NGOs to opt for a new way of conducting their activities such as converting to the for-profit stream (Galvin, M.D. & Ianotti L., 2015: 424).

Consequently, the reasons behind SEs creation will largely depend on the context of the country or region in which they are or wish to be located. The environment in which they will conduct their activities usually will target a specific part of a population that are located in a specific environment. That environment is, however, not always defined by physical frontiers or barriers, but rather economic ones. This means that SEs will most likely engage within vulnerable populations that face economic barriers and that are often marginalized from the main economy.

2.2 Social enterprises and government relationship

The relationship between SEs and governments is multidimensional. On the one side, there is the relationship with the host-country government. On the other side, there is the relation with donor governments or foreign governments that are willing to make investment into social businesses in order for them to be able to implement activities in new markets.

2.2.1 Host-country governments

Host-country governments can either be an enabler and an obstructor of SE creation and success. As explained in the literature, the absence of governments in different fields of social life needs will in most cases give a rationale for SE creation and intervention. On the other hand, the absence of national government can also lead to the lack of appropriate policies to support the implementation and the growth of SEs. As mentioned earlier, the absence or the lack of government intervention, notably in social programs, creates a gap and high level of social needs, which therefore lead to the creation of non-profits, but also social entrepreneurship (Weisbrod, 1977/1988 in Shockley & Frank, 2011: 189). This situation is explained through the institutional void perspective. This perspective explains that the absence of government capacity to play its normal and formal regulatory responsibilities combined with low resource availability will create a higher propensity for

SEs creation as the needs to be met are abundant (Stephan & *al.*, 2015: 309). The opposite is equally true as a more active government towards social programs won't lead to an increase of social need and the need for SEs compensation in that sector (Stephan & *al.*, 2015: 311). However, low state capacity can also hamper the likelihood of SEs creation. The political structure has a role to play in the attractiveness of entrepreneurial activities. It is government's responsibility to put in place regulations and mechanisms that will lead to the legitimacy of a social enterprise (Griffiths & *al.*, 2013: 343). Although, these regulations and stipulations can also have an influence on the desire to create a social business, if they are not favourable (Griffiths, Kickul & Carsrud, 2009: 628). As demonstrated by Scarpetta & *al.*, the regulations that are put in place by a national government in terms of entrepreneurial activity have a direct impact on a firm likelihood of entering a market and on its productivity as well (2002: 26). These regulations can take different forms such as licenses, employment, property right and enforcement, taxes, trade regulations, protection of investors, but also accessing credit or even accessing electricity (Griffiths, Kickul & Carsrud, 2009: 631). If done correctly they can help to provide a safe environment for investment, otherwise, they can become structural barriers than an incoming or even a national business will have to face in order to be able to implement its activities. Consequently, the more restrictive regulations and policies are and the more complicated or timely it is to complete every step, the less likely an entrepreneur will choose to enter that market or into the formal economy.

As the absence of government in normally attributed responsibilities, can, on the one hand, provide the rational and a demand for support from social enterprises, its absence can also hamper SEs ability to first establish themselves but also to grow and succeed in their mission. This where the paradox between SE and government relationship resides. Stephan & *al.* explained, through the institutional support perspective, that by providing tangible support to SEs, such as “grants, subsidies, and other direct funding” (2015: 311) as well as intangible support that may “include assistance with completion of grant applications, endorsement and sponsorship [...] and] even access to specific networks or stakeholders” (Stephan & *al.*, 2015: 311), this behavior can also trigger SEs creation. However, it is important to note that the government presence in terms of regulations and policies

establishment, with exception of policies and regulations directly supporting SEs, doesn't necessarily guarantee that these regulations and policies will be in favor of social enterprises, despite the fact that they have a social mission. This can be explained by the fact that social enterprises are considered as for-profit and tend to be categorized more as a private firm with private sector rather than a non-profit, which therefore required from them to follow the for-profit path for accessing a country or a market, instead of following the non-profit avenue.

As stated, host-country governments can play a beneficial role in the creation of SEs by being absent of certain sphere of its social system. However, this absence can also be translated in the lack of regulations and policies protecting and enabling SEs creation. On the other side, the presence of government does not necessarily ensure SEs that appropriate regulations and policies will be established, and in their favor. As market access can be uncertain and with high risks, notably in less developed countries, outside governments or donors' governments can play a role in mitigating these risks.

2.2.2 Foreign and donors' governments

Considering what was explained in the last section, it is appropriate that we look into the relationship between donors' governments and SEs. Before entering into the core of the subject is it important to draw a quick portrait of the relationship evolution between donors' governments and NGOs/SEs. As mentioned earlier, the creation of SEs is often found in contexts where there is a gap to fill in terms of social needs. However, SE creation isn't only the result of social needs presence, it is also the results of financial needs due to a highly competitive sector (Rametse & Shah, 2012: 1). Dees highlighted that this situation and the relationship change it caused between donors and non-profit organizations dependants on grants or subventions have pushed those organizations to explore other avenues (1998, p. 56). This was the case in the 1980s in the United States during the Reagan administration (Galvin, M.D. & Ianotti L., 2015, p. 424) and still the case under Trump's administration as several cuts are made for social programs and international development envelops. However, as the relationship is evolving from a more funding dependant organization to a more self-sufficient one, it is important to highlight that governments are

still providing support to organizations with social missions and also NGOs with grants and financial contributions like they always did.

The redefinition of the relationship between donors and NGOs/SEs allows for more flexibility. The role of the government in this type of relationship also changed. The government is no longer seen as the provider of funding only, but more as a partner to leverage other types of capital and providing assistance in forms of money to help manage the risks of entering a new market. As explained in a report written by Rogerson & *al.*, there are four main rationales, or reasons, for why governments would accept to deliver Official Development Assistance (ODA) money to SEs. These are: market failure, inclusive and sustainable growth, contracting-out rationale and experimentation and first mover (2014: 3). Market failure is referring to the externalities and public goods, the information asymmetry and the weakness of support in terms of the services market. As the market fails to distribute resources efficiently, SEs can face difficulties in these three sectors which can hamper the ability to pursue their activities. Government therefore advocate the need of funding for SEs as a way to mitigate the effects such difficulties can generate on these businesses. As for the rationale about inclusive and sustainable growth, the government will tend to finance SEs that are located in markets that are not developing as planned, as a result of structural barriers that are still present (Rogerson & *al.*, 2014: 4). These barriers can make the product or service unaffordable and, therefore, the government funding can help absorb some of the production cost in order to offer a more affordable price. The contracting-out rationale is more related to the value for money aspect of funding as SEs could be providing more cost-efficient services compared to the government or other institutions of the welcoming country. Under those circumstances, donors might prefer funding a SE rather than the government itself. Finally, the fourth argument of donors for providing ODA money to SEs resides in the experimentation of the firms but also in overcoming the cost of being a first-mover firm. This can also be linked to the market failure rationale, as a first mover might face big information asymmetries when they first enter a market. In addition, as the results of innovation and experimentation of new methods, technology or new clientele are never guaranteed, donors funding can foster their likelihood of undertaking such process (Rogerson & *al.*, 2014: 5). Moreover, this

rationale can also be used when government intends to fund a SEs as the purpose of helping it scale up its activities and extend the scope of its intervention. As stated by Palomares-Aguirre & *al.*, government involvement in terms of funding or policy establishment is necessary for a firm that is trying to scale up (2018: 4508). These rationales are not without risks as they can create distortion of the market, more risk-taking behavior, but it can also create problems with the host-country government. Contracting-out is a good example, as such rationale advocate that certain SEs are more efficient in terms of providing a service than the national government. It is, therefore, important for the donor to use that rationale carefully and more prudent to use it when the destination government has asked for such type of help (Rogerson & *al.*, 2004: 5).

Finally, on top of helping SEs enterprises to face different entry barriers in emerging economies to ensure beneficial results in their intervention, the funding provided by donors can also help SEs to leverage other capital. Contrary to what is said in Rogerson & *al* article (2014: p. 6), donors' funding helps attract private or commercial capital into investing in a specific SE or fund dedicated to SEs. The concept of regrouping public and private money is not new, as it has been widely done under what we call public-private partnerships, notably in the case of infrastructure projects (Finance in motion, 2020: 7). However, since 2015, and the recognition that to attain the SDGs private investment is also necessary, the idea of blending private and public finance together made a resurgence and it refers to what is now called blended finance (Finance in motion, 2020: 8). Blended finance as it is explained by *Finance in motion* is not an investment approach but rather a way of structuring each party investment or as describe by the UN General Assembly: an investment vehicle (Finance in motion, 2020: p. 7). On another note, impact investment. used by the private and the public sectors to finance SEs, is a way to ensure that the project or organization is providing a social or environmental impact in exchange of the invested money (Castellas & *al.*, 2018: 130; Finance in motion, 2020: 7). On the contrary, blended finance, like said, will be structuring the money received and the returns according to each party requirements for the investment. In these type of investment structure, each party will benefit from the transaction : the SE will obtain the desired capital to face barriers or to expand their activities, the private investors will be able to make a return out of the capital

they invested and the public sector, such as government, philanthropists or development financial institutions (DFIs) will be able to attain their ultimate goal which is social and environmental impacts and eventually reduction of poverty. Foremost, just as much as SEs, private investors also face several barriers and uncertainty which results in a high risk of not getting their money back. They also face a lack of knowledge and understanding of these emerging economies or even the lack of expertise about the sector they want to invest in and they might not have the incentive to invest in such markets taken into account that there is a high competition for private capital (Samans, 2016: p. 73). In that situation, within a blended finance structure will help reduce the risks the private investment money can encounter. As a matter of fact, the public sector has a higher tolerance to risks and therefore will be more willing to use their investment as an absorption mechanism in case of potential risks facing, as they often are searching for impact rather than returns (Samans, 2016: p. 75). In that case, they will often offer first-loss funding or subordinated funding, which means that the private investors will be reimbursed before the public sector, notably in case of losses (Finance in motion, 2020: p. 9). Moreover, their contribution to the blended finance deal is bringing to the table an understanding of the destination investment market and political system. That is all the more true in the case of development aid agencies as they probably have already been working within that market, which gives them some knowledge about the actors, local partners and networks present in it, which close the gap of knowledge of private investors. Finally, they also have the diplomatic capacities of influence the destination government in reviewing regulations and/or policies that might hamper the investment climate of their economy (Samans, 2016: p. 75-76).

As explained in this section, the relationship between SEs and governments is twofold. On the one side, SEs have a paradoxical relationship with the host-country government as its action and non-action can both create benefices as well as challenges for them. Action in one sector can drive the potential of creation for SEs, but non-action can also put at jeopardy their ability of success on the long term. On the other side, the relationship with foreign governments can mostly be resumed in terms of financing. Of course, there will be some exchange of knowledge and partnership between the two entities as the government in question provided them with funding, but it will mostly stay more of a financial

relationship. That relationship is nonetheless important as the public funding of governments will help crowd-in more investment money at the benefice of SEs.

Now that the ground has been laid in terms of what the literature is saying regarding SEs and their relationship with governments, the next chapter, will give an overview of what is done in practice, by establishing the state of SEs activities in the agro-food sector of Sub-Saharan Africa. Two case studies will also be presented, and analysis will be conducted in order to highlight the main component of SEs in these sectors.

3 Case Study

Historically, NGOs have played a significant role in attempting to alleviate poverty around the world. Yet, using only donors funding has limited NGO's capacity in eradicating of poverty, since there is a high competition to obtain funding (Rametse & Shah, 2012: p. 1) and resources are limited. NGOs working in the African context are not different, as developing African countries are characterized by a number of issues such as high levels of poverty, poor governance, deficient infrastructure, a large informal economic sector, and market failures (Rivera-Santos & *al.*, 2015: p. 3). Such situation creates several opportunities for social entrepreneurs to establish SEs. These challenges are notably observed in the agricultural sector, where 60% of Sub-Saharan Africans are smallholder farmers (Goedde, Ooko-Ombaka & Pais, 2019: Online). Of these farmers, 220 million survive with less than 2\$ per day (Hello Tractor, IMPACT: 7). Issues faced by smallholder farmers need to be addressed in order to help them get out of poverty, which include: the decline in land/labor ratios and unequal land distribution; lack of crop productivity and performance of markets; the growing demand for food due to the growth in population and the inability of fulfilling it; the rise of commercial farming and its impact on prices; and limited non-farm options for households without land or education (Jayne, Mather & Mghenyi, 2010: 1385-1390). Such challenges are often the result of governments' lack of prioritization of the sector or their inability to address these issues. While there are many challenges to tackle, a lot of attention has, in the past decade, been focused on increasing smallholders' productivity through an increase access to agricultural inputs such as labor, land, fertilizers, chemicals, animal power, water and mechanization (Faurès & Santini,

2008: 8). The subsequent section will present two case studies in which social enterprises have tackled smallholder farmers' productivity challenges. The context resulting in the creation of these social businesses, the benefits and challenges of these initiatives, as well as government relations and other partnerships will be presented in order to further analyze the relationships between social enterprises and governments in the subsequent chapter.

3.1 Improving access to mechanization: Hello Tractor

The first case study under analysis concerns the social Agri-tech enterprise Hello Tractor. Hello tractor was created in 2014 by Jehiel Oliver, an economics graduate student from Cornell University, who was further appointed for a two years mandate as a member of the President's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa under the Obama Administration (World Bank Live, Online). The enterprise developed a mobile phone platform that allows smallholder farmers to connect with tractor owners in their area and rent their machinery. Jehiel's rationale for developing Hello Tractor was the belief that smallholder farmers are (part of) the answer to resolve food insecurity and reduce poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (Hello Tractor, *About us*). The enterprise was originally created in Nigeria but has seen its activities getting expanded in other countries such as Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal and Tanzania (Hello Tractor, 2018: p. 5). However, for the purpose of this research paper, only Nigeria will be analyzed. Before detailing Hello Tractor activities and impact, the first part of this case study will lay out the context of the agricultural sector in Nigeria, highlighting the challenges farmers' face in order to better explain how this specific social enterprise's product intervenes in the context.

3.1.1 Nigerian Context

Nigeria is a sub-Saharan African country located in the western region of Africa, next to the Guinea gulf. With an approximative population of 198 million people (WFP, 2019, 1), Nigeria is the most populated country in sub-Saharan Africa accounting for almost half of Western Africa's population (World Bank, 2019). Nationally, a little less than half its population (46%) lives below the poverty line of USD 1.9 a day (FAO, 2018: 1). This number rises to 77% of the population for the northeast region of the country (WFP, 2019: p. 4). The GDP per capita of Nigeria amounted to 2396.11 (in constant 2010

US\$) in 2018 (World Bank, 2019a). Over half of Nigeria's population, i.e. 56%, lives in rural areas, of which approximately 70% are relying on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood (IFAD, 2016: 1).

In the 1960s, the Nigerian economy was sustained by the agricultural, the manufacturing and solid mineral sectors. The revenues from the agricultural exports made up the local governments' revenues. However, with the arrival of the oil boom, Nigeria began exporting oil products which led to the decrease of the importance of the agriculture sector in the country's GDP and exports, while its share of import increased simultaneously (Sorunke, 2019: 5). The oil boom provided strong economic performance for the country, with a GDP growth of more than 7% per year between 1970 and 1980 (Sorunke, 2019: 6). Even if the importance of oil revenues decreased throughout the years, it remains that, in 2017, oil revenues were still accounting for 69% of Nigeria's total revenue and for over 90% of its foreign revenues, making it a resource-dependent country (Sorunke, 2019: 5). The economic boost in the 1970s led the government to implement industrialization policies prioritizing the manufacturing industry at the detriment of the agriculture sector, decreasing its spending in the sector from an average of 4.57% of its budget between 1986 and 1993 to less than 2% between 2004 and 2006 (Sorunke, 2019: 9). The lack of government support towards agriculture also led to the reduction of revenues of the government from the sector, although compensated by the oil export revenues. The population dependent on agricultural exports suffered through these policy changes as they also saw their revenues drastically shrunk (Sorunke, 2019: 5). The oil boom combined with the push towards industrialization policies impacted severely the agricultural sector making it less of a priority for the national government despite the knowledge that this sector is the first source of revenue for at least 50% of the Nigerian population.

The oil boom and the policies derived from it, also created a more subtle impact on the agriculture sector. Effectively, before these events, 75% of the country's labor force was concentrated in the agriculture sector contrary to only 36.62% in 2017. The oil boom and industrialization diverted the labor force from the agriculture sector to the other sectors which contributed to the lack a labor force in the agriculture sector. This situation increased

the cost of labor but also contributed to the low levels of performance by the sector (Sorunke, 2019: 7). In front of these challenges, the introduction of mechanization in the sector, in replacement of the hand tools, could have been a good alternative to mitigate the effect of the lack of labor as mechanization tend to allow farmers to overcome labor shortages and increase production (Daum & *al.*,2020: 1). However, the sector's structural context makes it difficult to implement despite the government efforts to rectify the impact of their previous policies and promote mechanization. Effectively, most of Nigerian farmers, 88% of them, are considered smallholder farmers therefore practicing subsistence agriculture on land of an approximative size of 0.53 ha (FAO, 2018: 2). The IFRPI considers that a minimum land size of 50 hectares is required for the purchase of a tractor to be economically viable (Sorunke, 2019: 11). In this case, the mechanization option is not viable since their land represents a fraction of the ideal land size. Moreover, the limited access to financing hampers the possibility for farmers to move towards mechanization solutions as it requires them to possess enough capital. The access to finance from commercial banks is notably a challenge for smallholder farms because of the collateral requirements and high interest's rate (Sorunke, 2019: 10). The federal government did implement some policies allowing the reduction of interest rates for farmers, but their implementation hasn't been consistent (Sorunke, 2019: 10). It stays nonetheless that other structural challenges such as poor property rights are also in the way of smallholder farmers to access finance. According to IFAD, 95% of land dedicated to agriculture is untitled, which prohibits occupants to use their land as collateral (IFAD, 2016: 1).

As explained, the Nigerian agricultural sector faces many structural obstacles that prohibit farmers to increase their productivity and escape poverty. This is without taking into account more punctual challenges that are exacerbating the situation, such as the exponential growth of the population, environmental degradation, poor irrigation, climate change, criminality and conflicts (FAO, 2018: 2; IFAD, 2016: 2; WFP, 2019: 5). The situation that smallholder farmers are facing in terms of low productivity and getting out of poverty is multidimensional. However, several actors, national and international, are working towards bettering the situation and reducing the pressure over smallholder farmers' head by helping them achieve a better productivity. One of them Hello Tractor.



3.1.2 Hello Tractor solution

As mentioned, Hello Tractor is an Agri-tech social enterprise created in 2014 in Abuja, Nigeria that later expanded its activities to Senegal, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania. Its mission consists of improving the access to mechanization for smallholder farmers by connecting smallholder farmers with tractor owners through an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) application similar to the Uber hail riding app (Daum & al., 2020, 2). Hello Tractor original plan which consisted of selling two wheeled tractors with low horse power, however because of the Nigerian economic crisis and the limited access to credit for smallholders' farmers their original vision did not end up working out. Therefore, the SE decided to focus their efforts mainly on selling their monitoring devices to tractor owners and large cooperatives who already owned tractors (Daum & al., 2020: 7). The rationale behind the creation of such app comes from the acknowledgement that despite billions of development aid spent each year by donors to improve the living standard and the productivity of crops, smallholder farmers are still trapped in poverty. The SE explains that this situation is the result of inappropriate and disorganized agricultural value chains that leave farmers without the appropriate knowledge and equipment to be more productive (Hello Tractor, IMPACT: 5). According to Hello Tractor, since more than 200 million people across sub-Saharan Africa survive with less than 2\$ a day, the increase of mechanization can help to reduce by increasing agricultural productivity, which would lead to an increase in farmers' revenues and employment opportunities on farms as well as off farms within related industries such as food processing, trade, manufacturing and other services (Hello Tractor, IMPACT : p. 7). In their impact report, the SE explains that mechanization has been widely recognized as a key component to increase the productivity of inputs used in the agricultural production, such as time, labor, seeds, fertilizer and water as tractors can be used in different parts of the production process. For example, when tractors are not available, the land and the inputs are not exploited to their full potential which can also lead to the loss of crop yields as some of them might face rot before farmers are able to harvest them (Hello Tractor, IMPACT: 10). As shown in Table 1, the use of one tractor is equivalent to the labor of 40 people and is 2.5 times cheaper than manual labor. However, the size of most smallholder farmers' land doesn't make the purchase of a tractor

economically viable. Moreover, the initial cost of mechanization and the lack of access to credit makes it even more difficult for farmers.

Hello tractor’s products come therefore as a way to bridge the gap between the need for higher productivity and the lack of accessibility to mechanization solutions for smallholder farmers. By bridging the demand and the offer, Hello tractor allows some actors of the agriculture ecosystem to benefit from such exchange as smallholder farmers can rent a tractor for their production and have higher crop yields, and tractor owners can alleviate the cost of their purchase by earning additional income, which also makes it more profitable

Table 1

	TRACTOR	MANUAL(40 PEOPLE)
		
SPEED	40x faster	Slow
COST	2.5x cheaper	Cost Intensive
<p>Benefits of tractor service for farmers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant on time • 63% average savings • Upwards of 3x increase in yield 		
<small>Source: International Rice Research Institute</small>		

in the long run (Daum & *al.*, 2020: p. 1-2). One of its main beneficial components is that its digital platform help reduces the transaction costs between both parties. Effectively, depending on the service chosen, Hello Tractor application is coupled with the selling of monitoring devices to tractor owners allowing them to access GPS data, operation activities, fuel efficiency (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 7), route optimization and even remote immobilization (Hello Tractor, Online A). This monitoring device, combined with the booking app in which farmers indicate the size of their land, the type of services required and the nature of the farm plot (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 9), therefore reduce the information

asymmetries and also the risk of potential problems for tractor owners. On the farmers' side, the Hello Tractor application offers them quick access to machinery without having to leave their farm, helping them plant and harvest their production on time, hence reducing their losses. However, not long after its creating, Hello Tractor had to make some adjustment to make it profitable for smallholder farmers, as they realized that the low percentage of mobile owners, which is 30% (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 7), and the even lower percentage of smartphone owners, which is 13%, in the Nigerian population (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 8) were hampering the profitability of their business not reaching as many beneficiaries as planned. As a solution, they chose to adapt their concept with a booking application as well as booking agents, which allowed smallholder farmers with no smartphone to access their services, but also help other people in rural communities such as young people (Hello Tractor, IMPACT: 16) to secure revenues as they receive a 10% commission for their services (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 8)

Despite the positive outcomes of the Hello tractor concept, the mobile application and the social enterprise have some downsides. The first one consists of smallholder farmers' trust in the system as some farmers prefer to see the tractor beforehand the application doesn't offer such possibility, which does not help to improve the trust level. This situation can become a challenge for booking agent as the process by which Hello Tractor works, requires that smallholder farmers' pay a commitment fee before obtaining the service (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 8). Leading in some cases, to the impossibility for the booking agent to secure a transaction, therefore generating a loss of revenue for both the booking agent and the tractor owner. The second downside resides in the fact that as booking agent are not living within the farming community, their commute to farming communities can incur high transportation costs that can discourage them to go to areas where road infrastructure or public transit are limited (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 8). This situation limit the access to the platform and all its services for smallholder farmers living in more secluded areas and difficult to reach areas. In the same line of thoughts, poor road infrastructure can also lead tractor owners to refuse to deliver the services to farmers even if arrangements for service delivery have already been made (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 10). Finally, one of the main negative points about Hello Tractor and its application is that, despite extensively promoting their

help towards the improvement of mechanization among smallholder farmers, their operations are majorly benefiting tractor associations or contractors instead of smallholder farmers (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 10). On the one side, they are indirectly benefitting smallholder farmers by increasing their production. Although, on the other side, even for individual tractor owners and small associations or cooperatives that own tractors the benefits are limited as resorting to the platform, notably to booking agents with 10% commission, might not be profitable for them, notably if these booking agents are not always travelling to secluded areas and establish strong relationships with customers (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 11). However, large contractors and associations, that have hundreds of tractors and offer their services in different zones, have more benefits in using the application. The platform and the GPS offered help them monitor their tractors from distance, coordinate their service provision and collect data (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 11). Moreover, according to those associations and contractors, the collection of data has helped them access loans from banks (Daum & *al.*, 2020: 10). Yet, there is no evidence that this platform has generated similar impact of smallholder farmers' ability to access credit. Hence, Hello Tractor offers a good alternative for smallholder farmers who can't afford mechanization, leading in a better productivity. It stays, nonetheless, that despite promoting helping smallholder farmers, Hello Tractor application has proven to be more beneficial to more wealthy farmers and large associations.

3.1.3 Partnerships

For Hello Tractor, partnerships have mostly been made with other NGOs and the private sector. Their first partnerships were concluded with Progress and IBM. These partnerships allowed Hello Tractor to develop their mobile application (Progress, 2018: pp. 1-2), but also to ensure that the platform could appropriately capture data for tractor owners and Hello Tractor to use and eventually share (IBM, 2018: Online). Although the impression is that Hello Tractor has mainly been partnering with the private sector, the SE has once partnered with USAID for the implementation of their *Feed the Future initiative, Partnering for Innovation project*. The project, implemented by Fintrac, consisted of increasing the access of smallholder farmers to smart tractors, profitable markets and improved seeds across Nigeria (USAID (B), Online). On the same note, Hello Tractor also

partnered with the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center for the implementation of their project on *Farm Mechanization and Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable Intensification* (FACASI), which was funded by the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (Hello Tractor, Online B). The objectives of these partnerships are mainly oriented towards the utilization of Hello Tractor mobile app as a way to improve mechanization access throughout the project, but also a way for Hello Tractor to reach more customers (Hello Tractor, 2018, Online). In addition, one of the most important partnerships for Hello Tractor is the John Deere partnership. Effectively, in 2018, at the request of the Nigerian Agricultural Mechanization and leasing company (NAMEL) and with the support of the Nigerian government, John Deere accepted to supply 10,000 tractors in the country for leasing purposes, while Hello Tractor mobile app supported the partnership by managing the fleet with the help of their monitoring device (NAMEL, 2018). Since its inception, Hello Tractor has mainly established partnerships with NGOs and the private sector. Although it did receive funds from governments, such funding was never entirely dedicated to the SE for its development.

3.2 Improving the access to irrigation: Kickstart International Inc.

The second case study under analysis is Kickstart International Inc. Kickstart can be considered as a pioneer in the field of social entrepreneurship as it was first established in 1991, by Martin Fisher and Nick Moon, two former employees of ActionAid, who worked in Sub-Saharan Africa for many years. The organization was originally founded under the name of Appropriate Technologies for Enterprise Creation (ApproTEC), which later became Kickstart (Fisher, 2006: 13). ApproTEC was established in Kenya as a non-profit. However, unlike other NGOs, ApproTEC used a market-based model meaning that they would sell their technologies to local entrepreneurs and use marketing strategies to promote their products instead of providing these technologies for free as NGOs have traditionally been doing (Fisher, 2006: 14). The model is based on the rationale that if poor people purchased willingly their technologies, the likelihood of them using and maintaining it would be higher than if the technology was given to them. Additionally, this model helped create a feeling of dignity rather than dependency amongst customers (George & Prasad, 2010: 75). It is not surprising that, during the 1990s, promoting and

implementing such model was considered crazy by other traditional development actors (George & Prasad, 2010: 75). However, since the beginning of their organization, Fisher and Moon have received the support of government agencies such as the British Department for International Development (DFID) (Fisher, 2006, 13). Throughout their development, Kickstart has promoted different technologies from low-cost pit latrine technology for a UNHCR refugee camp, to a block press for making building blocks with soil and a small amount of cement, to a fiber concrete roofing tiles machine and to an oil-pressing machine extracting oil from sunflower seeds (Fisher, 2010: 14). Even though all these technologies were successful, both social entrepreneurs wanted to have direct impact on poverty. This is when the enterprise decided to develop irrigation technologies allowing farmers to move from subsistence farming towards irrigated farming (Fisher, 2010: 15). This new vision led to the creation of various small irrigation devices that are affordable for smallholder farmers and that help them expand their production and, ultimately, exit poverty. Before entering into the core of the case study and explain how Kickstart activities fit into the agricultural sector and resolve some of the access issues, a short overview of the irrigation context in Sub-Saharan Africa will be presented.

3.2.1 State of irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Since Kickstart International is located in 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, it seemed more appropriate to present the overall context of irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa. As of 2018, only 5% of arable lands in Africa were irrigated, while this number reaches up to 20% worldwide (Kickstart, 2018: 4). Historically, attempts at creating public large-scale irrigation systems in many African countries have been taking place since the beginning of the 20th century, where colonial administration started investing in large-scale irrigation schemes, such as gravity-fed irrigation in order to irrigate thousands of hectares (Wiggins & Lankford, 2019: 24). The Office du Niger in Mali is a good example of such investment, as it covers more than 70 thousand hectares (Wiggins & Lankford, 2019: 24). After the decolonization, and the independence of many African countries, these large-scale schemes were perceived as promising for the continent as irrigation could offer farmers a constant yearly water supply for crops, but also politically as a way to promote the newly acquired

power of these states (Wiggins & Lankford, 2019: 24). Around the mid-1980s it became more obvious that these large public irrigation schemes were not as functional as desired, and in some cases were literally failing. Problems, such as higher costs, complications, shortcomings into the distribution system, corruption resulting in poor distribution of water, conflict over land property and usage as well as negative environmental impacts resulted from these irrigation projects, but the main cause for failure was due to a lack of planning and consideration of farmers' social and economic context (Wiggins & Lankford, 2019: 24-25).

Concerned by the poor efficiency, the high costs and the performance irrigation management by African governments, international donor agencies, such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the US Agency for International Development started promoting participatory irrigation management reforms in Africa (Cambaza, Hoogesteger and Veldwisch, 2019: 5). The promotion of irrigation management transfer (IMT) came at the same time as structural adjustment and decentralization programs were promoted by both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Cambaza, Hoogesteger and Veldwisch, 2019: 8). These reforms had for goals to rationalize public spending in the irrigation sector as well as modernizing its institutions, while also allowing the participation of the private sector to improve the performance and the productivity of these large-scale systems (Cambaza, Hoogesteger and Veldwisch, 2019: 5). The main reforms component was the decentralization of irrigation and the transfer of its responsibilities to user-based associations (Cambaza, Hoogesteger and Veldwisch, 2019: 5). The donors' rationale was embedded in the belief that it would generate a better delivery system as water users would be responsible for the system and its management (Cambaza, Hoogesteger and Veldwisch, 2019: 6). Yet, the IMT did not resolve any performance or technical problems. Instead, some Water Users Associations faced high cost for maintenance, repair and rehabilitation of infrastructure, which were barely affordable for many members (Wiggins & Lankford, 2019: 27). Moreover, acting collectively was very costly in terms of money, but also in terms of time, as associations leaders had to spend long hours in meetings to resolve problems. A few years after the IMT, it became clear that dealing with large-scale irrigation schemes were not a positive

change for farmers, and therefore the enthusiasm around it died down quickly (Wiggins & Lankford, 2019: 27), leaving behind small-scale farm-led irrigation as one of the only options remaining. However, small-scale irrigation pumps using petrol can cost around \$3000 US, and as for electric ones, less than 10% of Africa's population have access to a reliable source of grid electricity, making this option unsustainable. As for solar electricity, it is still considered to be too costly for most smallholder farmers. The only option left was irrigating the land with a bucket and a rope, which is time consuming and inefficient (George & Prasad, 2010: 74). In response to this problematic, Kickstart designed a manually operated micro-irrigation pump that allows farmers to efficiently move water from its source to the field, and the device only costs \$100 USD (George & Prasad, 2010: 75).

3.2.2 Kickstart International Inc. solution

During the same period that large-scale irrigation was left behind, Kickstart introduced their first treadle pump, the Super MoneyMaker, on the market, which only cost \$100 US. Despite its still expensive cost for smallholder farmers, Kickstart refused to give the pumps out to farmers, since they believed that smallholder farmers would get a return on their investment within three to six months of purchasing the pump. This was based on the belief that farmer will be more tempted to use the pump they bought with their hard-earned money, and benefit from enhanced crop productivity, compared to if it was given to them (George & Prasad, 2010: 75). The pump design was made in order to facilitate its use as it was portable, a maximum of two people was needed to use it, and it had a shorter tread so women with long skirts could still use them (George & Prasad, 2010: 75-76). Throughout the years, various versions of the pump were released, each new version taking into account customers reviews, efficiency and affordability. Depending on the model chosen, Moneymaker pumps could cost between \$35 US to \$100 US and had a capacity to irrigate between one and two acres of land (George & Prasad, 2010: 70). Kickstart business model is designed around building a profitable supply chain in which retailers and wholesalers could make a profit by selling the pumps (Fisher, 2006: 21).

Notwithstanding a rocky beginning and the difficulty to secure funding in order to develop their organization, the Kickstart model is highly successful. As of 2019, Kickstart estimated having sold more than 348,000 pumps, lifted 1.3 million people out of poverty, created 260,000 businesses and 240,000 jobs, fed 13 million people each year and secured new annual farm profits and wages of \$220 million (Kickstart, 2019, Online). The average reported net income of farms using Kickstart's pump grew from \$110 to \$1,100 USD per year, as a result of the pumps usage (Fisher, 2006: 9). Their impact on smallholder farmers is such that not only farmers are able to secure higher incomes, but they are also able to increase their investment on other farm inputs that benefits their production such as seeds and fertilizers (Fisher, 2006: 17-18). Moreover, indirect benefits include better nutrition, health care, housing and education for the farmer's family (Fisher, 2006: 18). Their 2018 annual report shows that for the households using Kickstart's pumps there is an increase 23% in children enrollment in early education, 74% decreased in school-age children missing school and 85% of households were able to pay for school fees and expenses with the additional money they secure from irrigating their land (Kickstart, 2018: 7). This impact is mostly due to the possession of the MoneyMaker pump that allows farmers to have three to four crops cycles a year instead of the usual one or two with rain-fed agriculture. It also allows farmers to grow higher-value crops as they are able to furnish the right amount of water to grow the crops properly even during the dry season (George & Prasad, 2010: 81). Pumps have also been used for other purposes such as starting vehicle washing or drinking water supply businesses (George & Prasad, 2010: 81). The key to their success is mainly due to their phenomenal effort in marketing and promoting their product around sub-Saharan Africa, an effort that was mainly funded by foreign donors agencies (Fisher, 2006: 24) which allowed Kickstart to go through this early product introduction phase when prices are at the highest to the high volume phase where prices are the lowest (George & Prasad, 2010: 81).

Despite their success, Kickstart faced many challenges along the road. The organization has, however, shown flexibility and adaptability. One of the main challenges they faced early on was reaching out to smallholder farmers and convincing them of the benefits of such pumps considering the high initial cost, but also considering that smallholder farmers

are the most risk-averse population segment, are not familiar with new technologies and have poor education (Fisher, 2006: 26). This led Kickstart to adopt different marketing strategies to show the efficiency of their products such as pumps competitions, radio advertisements and commissioned sales force to attract customers to see demonstrations, and to remain consistent in their presence and their approach towards the most reluctant customers (Fisher, 2006: 23). Sales agents also travelled to more secluded areas in order to show potential customers their products directly at their homes (Fisher, 2006: 23). They further added a guarantee policy in order to reduce the perceive financial risk from smallholder farmers. By offering this policy, farmers were assured they would get their money back or at least another pump if the one they bought broke (George & Prasad, 2010: 79). Moreover, being conscious about the lack of institutions providing adapted finance for smallholder farmers (George & Prasad, 2010: 85), Kickstart decided to pilot their own financing programs : the Mobile Layaway and the Rent-to-own programs to allow farmers to either buy the pump after saving enough money by using the MPesa platform on their mobile phone, or obtain a pump after making a 20% down payment and then continuing monthly payment for the next five months (Kickstart, 2015: 22). After a few years of piloting, it became too expensive for the organization to administrate the programs and not attractive enough for smallholder farmers (Kickstart: 2016: 23). They therefore decided to partner with a microfinance organization to keep offering loans to smallholder farmers who wanted to purchase their pumps but did not have that amount of money in their possession (Kickstart, 2017: 15). While many similar pump models were being released, and taking into account the difficulty to obtain and enforce patents in developing countries (Fisher, 2006: 27), the organization decided to add agropreneurship training sessions to farmers or organizations buying their products as a way to remain competitive (Kickstart, 2017: 14). In 2016 only, training courses were delivered in Malawi, Chad, Uganda and Tanzania to more than 3,000 farmers, of which 60% were women, responding to requests from various NGOs (Kickstart, 2016: 23).

After almost 20 years of activity in Sub-Saharan Africa, Kickstart have faced the challenges it encountered along the road, which mainly consisted of finding innovative ways of reaching out to smallholder farmers and making their products affordable to the poorest

farmers. Through their rigorous monitoring practices, data collections and customer reviews, Kickstart was able to tackle their challenges quite efficiently and rapidly. In order to be constantly ready for new challenges and new adaptation, Kickstart have put in place an Innovation Hub in Kenya, which allows the organization to conduct research, experiments and pilots helping them to constantly improve their products and continuously put forward their most efficient strategies to reach difficult-to-reach groups (Kickstart, 2018: 5). These efforts proved to be efficient as in 2018, Kickstart launched two new products: a solar pump and a starter pump (which would be the most affordable pump).

3.2.3 Partnerships

From its inception, Kickstart was very successful in establishing partnerships with other government institutions, NGOs, private sector enterprises, foundations and local distributors. Even though they have highlighted their difficulty to secure funding from international development agencies as a result of their business model, they have been able to secure multiple partnership with different development stakeholders as SEs business model and impact became more recognized (George & Prasad, 2010: 71). Their initial funding by DFID (Fisher, 2006: 13) was vital in their business model success as they used most of it to develop the market for their products, therefore reducing the initial high costs of introducing a new product in a market (George & Prasad, 2010: 84). Funding from DFID and USAID was also granted for their expansion to Tanzania and Mali, respectively. In 2013, Kickstart received more funding from USAID, in order to develop a financing program in Kenya: the mobile layaway and the rent-to-own program (USAID (A), Online). As it was later proven to be costly for Kickstart and ineffective in attracting customers (Kickstart, 2016: 23), Kickstart decided to partner with an already existing micro loans platform from VisionFund International, the microfinance component of World Vision (Kickstart, 2018: 3). Compared to the previous financing tentative, the pilot was proven to be attractive to customers, as the loan repayment had a successful rate of 95% (Kickstart, 2018: 3). Despite receiving considerable funding from USAID and DFID for their expansion, Kickstart has mainly secured partnerships with other NGOs by doing business-to-business sales to other NGOs (Fisher, 2006: 28). This strategy was a way to promote the sales and the distributions of their pumps throughout farmers' network known by NGOs.

These partnerships are often aligned with partners' own programming activities favoring the transition to irrigated farming (Kickstart, 2018: 3), therefore allowing Kickstart to provide agroentrepreneurship and pumps usage training to farmers and to partners' staff (Kickstart, 2017: 14). On top of partnerships for the promotion of their products and education of farmers, Kickstart have also established other partnerships with stakeholders of the private sector and academia in order to develop other technologies for a better access for farmers to irrigation. As an example, Kickstart is launching the Solar Pump, which is possible because of their partnership with the inventor and supplier of a specific motor pumps, which a similar technology will be used in developing of their new pump model (Kickstart, 2017: 23). They are also partnering with other organizations in order to refine a pay-as-you-go (PAYG) model in order to ensure that even the poorest household could afford the technology once released (Kickstart, 2017: 23). As Kickstart business model consists of only development and marketing their products and not directly selling them to the customers, the organization had to secure partnerships with different actors in the private and non-governmental sector in order to ensure that their products were being delivered to their customer's market. Partnerships with development agencies have then allowed them to improve their product quality and technology in a way to suit smallholder farmers' needs. However, even if Kickstart annual reports imply that they are also partnering with African governments, the current research hasn't been able to find any information on such partnerships, therefore making it impossible for this research to develop on this type of partnership.

4 Discussion

The following section will analyze and discuss the two case studies presented in the previous, in light with the conceptualization of social enterprises and their relationship with governments. The analysis will help to answer these three questions: Are social enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa representative of the literature's general ideas about social enterprises? How should the relationship between donors and social enterprises (SE) in the agricultural sector of Sub-Saharan Africa be characterized? Are there any differences between the two case studies and if yes, what could potentially explain these differences?

It is important to note that this essay conclusions are based on available sources for these case studies and on the literature review discussed in the first section.

4.1 Social enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa: theory versus practice.

Before diving into the core of the analysis of both case studies, this section will compare the literature's theory of SEs with the reality of SEs encountered in the field and which will bring light to the following question: Are social enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa representative of the literature's general conceptualization social enterprises? The comparison will be based on both case studies and will allow to have a deeper understanding of each organization before answering the main question of this essay.

Firstly, Hello Tractor is an organization that saw an untapped potential within the agricultural sector and a societal need for better agricultural productivity as a way to lift people out of poverty. Effectively, since the agricultural sector in Nigeria has been neglected for many decades as a result of the oil boom and the industrialization of the country, subsistence farmers have seen labour availability diminished and its cost increased (Sorunke, 2019: 7). This situation created many problems for subsistence farmers (Daum & al, 2020: 7), on top of their already existing day-to-day struggles of living 2\$ a day, their poor property rights and access to finance (IFAD, 2016: 1). The latter affected their capability to own a tractor. A social need for higher mechanization emerged as a way to bridge the gap between the lack of labour and the need for farmers to harvest their crops. By offering a monitoring tools for tractor owners and a booking platform for farmers, Hello Tractor was able to partly answer the social need of the population for better mechanization. While answering the social need, Hello Tractor was selling their monitoring devices as a way to make profits. Therefore, using the business-like-minded management. This particular aspect of the organization makes Hello Tractor a hybrid organization has it combines both the social and profitably components presented in the literature review by Dees (1998), Dohery & al. (2014) and others. As a result of this balance between social impact and profits, our analysis showed that their impact on smallholders' farmers and therefore most vulnerable population was indirect and limited, since the company was mainly selling their products to larger and wealthier farmers charging service

fees to smallholders. Although this business model was beneficial for smallholders as it allowed them to plant, harvest and take care of their crops on time, they face some challenges in accessing the service as some do not own mobile phones and are also required to provide a deposit before booking the service.

Secondly, looking at Kickstart International Inc., it is also possible to consider this organization a social enterprise as it possesses the main characteristics of a SE as described in the literature review, which is the mix between social impact and profits. Although the organization is registered as a non-profit in Kenya (George & Prasad, 2010: 70) and is considering itself as a non-profit, Kickstart also considered itself as a social enterprise, as they are using a business type of management for their organization and are selling their products at a price where each step of the value chain can make a profit margin (Fisher, 2006, 20). By using a business-like-minded type of management, their goal is to firstly ensure a profitable value chain that could be sustained without them, but also by empowering their beneficiaries by selling them their products (George & Prasad, 2010: 75). In parallel, the organization's goal is also trying to answer a specific social need, which is the increase of agricultural productivity through improving access to irrigation tools. Irrigation in sub-Saharan Africa is an issue that governments and aid agencies have been trying to address for decades, but most of their efforts have been in vain as most of the continent remains non-irrigated (Cambaza, Hoogesteger & Veldwisch, 2020). Kickstart intervention therefore helps to answer the need for irrigation and water through the introduction of small, easily transportable devices and mostly affordable devices that allowed millions of smallholder farmers to access irrigation and to improve their crops productivity. Although Kickstart is not retaining any profits which any normal enterprise would hope to, the organization is still considering itself has a social enterprise because they are still using the business management model. This is compatible with what Rivera-Santos and others have extensively discussed in regard to the importance of the context in which each SE is created and operates. (Rivera-Santos M. et al., 2015: 73; Warnecke, T., & Houndonougbo N. A., 2016: 367-370; Gupta, S. & Beninger S., 2015: 92). Finally, because Kickstart is not making any tangible profits, it is possible to infer that their position

within Dees's spectrum is more drawn towards the importance of the social impact for the business itself, rather than making profits.

4.2 Governments and Social Enterprises Relationships

Now that each case has been situated in relations within the literature on social enterprise, this section will serve to answer the following question: How the relationship between governments (host and international) and social enterprises in the agricultural sector of Sub-Saharan Africa is characterized? This section will be divided by each case study in order to analyze and qualify the relationship of each SE with the host country and the international governments.

4.2.1 *Hello Tractor*

While looking at the case study about Hello Tractor, it is possible to denote that the SE has few relationships with both the host-country government and international donors. While the Nigerian Agricultural Mechanization and Equipment Leasing company (NAMEL) with the Nigerian governments, has recently established a partnership with John Deere for the supply of 10,000 tractors in which Hello Tractor technology is involved that partnership doesn't directly include the Nigerian government and Hello Tractor (NAMEL, Online; Hello Tractor, Online B). Both entities are part of the partnership as a way to offer support for a successful delivery rather than being the contracting parties. However, host-country governments and SEs relationship literature demonstrated that for governments and SEs to have a relationship, it does not require them to directly interact. As explained by Stephan & *al.*, the relationship between SEs and a host-governments can arise from the government disengagement or lack of engagement within a specific sector, which is referred to the institutional void as this disengagement will likely favour SEs creation (2015: 309). This is where the importance of the context in SEs creations and activities, enunciated by Rivera-Santos and others, becomes important as it also helps to understand and characterize SEs relationship with governments.

In the case of Hello Tractor, there is disengagement from the Nigerian government in the agricultural sector as a result of the oil boom, which created an institutional void and lead

to the creation of a need for better productivity within the sector. These unmet needs provided a rationale for Hello Tractor to enter the sector and bridge the gap between what was done by the government and what smallholder farmers needed. Although, the lack of engagement and consideration from the Nigerian government in the sector caused Hello Tractor to change its approach through time. In that sense, Hello Tractor's CEO mentioned, Hello Tractor's original business plan included selling a two-wheeled tractor combined with their monitoring technology. These tractors were sold to entrepreneurial farmers and cooperatives, who could then have access to Hello Tractor mobile platforms and provide renting services to other smallholder farmers (Foote, 2018). However, their original plan where not successful because of the Nigerian economic crisis, which led to currency depreciation but also higher price. Combined with a limited access to credit for smallholders' farmers from the government lack of engagement and investment in the sector, the original vision of the SE did not work out. Therefore, the SE decided to focus their efforts mainly on selling their monitoring devices to tractor owners and large cooperatives who already owned tractors (Daum & al., 2020: 7). This situation led to the critique made earlier regarding the SE's lack of impact on smallholder farmers productivity but also on their ability to lift that population out of poverty. In conclusion, government's disengagement gave an opportunity for Hello Tractor to be created, but also hampered its ability to be successful with their original business plan. Moreover, since the targeted sector of Hello Tractor has not been a priority for the host government, the relationship between Hello Tractor and the Nigerian government can be characterized as being very limited. This situation makes it difficult for the company to scale-up and attain their original objective of bettering smallholder farmers live by making mechanization accessible for all as the current business model only gives a limited access to mechanization which depends on wealthier farmers or cooperatives' approval.

Looking at the relationship with international donors' government, it is also possible to observe that the relationship Hello Tractor has with them is also very limited. Throughout the research about the SE's partnerships with international donors, the information found was very limited. The only direct partnership Hello Tractor had with the international donor agency was the one with USAID for their *Feed the Future Initiative*. The partnership lasted

two years (2016-2018), during which the SE provided training on tractor ownership and fleet management of Hello Tractor smart tractors to 134 young entrepreneurs. Moreover, the partnership allowed more than 3,600 smallholder farmers to access tractor services for their own needs (USAID (B), Online). Considering the context in which the enterprises and the partnership took place, it is possible to infer that the rationale behind USAID partnership with the SE can be explained by the inclusive and sustainable growth rationale. Although, it is important to mention that this essay's conclusions regarding the characteristics between SEs and international donors' government are based on available information and might differ in reality as donors' agencies are not required to publish or explained their intention behind each and every progress. As mentioned, the lack of inclusive and sustainable growth is considered to be a plausible reason behind the USAID partnership rational with Hello Tractor. Effectively, Rogerson & *al.*, highlighted that governments are more inclined to provide funding to SEs that are located in markets that have structural barriers resulting in the markets not developing as planned (2014: 5). Taking the Nigerian context into account, it is easy to understand why such rationale could lead to USAID partnering with Hello Tractor. Effectively, as the Nigerian government had limited its investment into the sector, but also its interventions, this led to a situation where a lot of necessary rules, mechanisms and institutions, such as financial institutions were lacking in the sector which made mechanization unaffordable for many smallholder farmers and didn't lead to an inclusive and sustainable growth within the sector.

As highlighted previously, the lack of access to credit is a major issue for smallholder farmers in Nigeria, as they can't have access to more capital to expand their activities or simply to enhance their efficiency. Even if Hello Tractor was provided with USAID money in order to help them achieve their initial business plan, the lack of access to credit, which is a structural barrier, still caused Hello Tractor, in 2017, to review their initial plan of selling a small tractor as the inability for smallholders to obtain loans made it impossible for them to buy the machinery (Foote, 2018). Although there is clearly a market failure for the provision of financial options for acquiring tractors and other mechanic tools for agricultural productivity, the partnership between Hello Tractor and USAID did not target such issue, since it only meant to provide tractors and not loans to acquire such machinery.

In sum, the analysis allows to conclude that the relationship Hello Tractor has with both host country and donors' governments, although limited, is based on institutional void and inclusive and sustainable growth rational. The organization has mainly been working with the Nigerian private sector to sell their monitoring devices. The third section of this chapter will offer potential explanation about why such relationships were limited.

4.2.2 *Kickstart International Inc.*

Kickstart International Inc. has a unique situation as it is registered as a non-profit, but, however, conducts its activities as a business. Although, Kickstart case study and the information collected shows that the organization has a higher tendency to put more emphasis on the social impact rather than the profits. Kickstart relationship with host governments are, however, not so different from the Hello Tractor case study. The creation of the organization resulted from a lack of engagement from the host-countries governments within the irrigation component of the agricultural sector. In spite of similarity in terms of host-government disengagement, which created an institutional void that Kickstart is trying to bridge, the context in which the disengagement was made is although different. Effectively, in the current case, host-country governments had to disengage from the sector at the request of international multilateral institutions and international donors' agencies, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and USAID as part of the structural adjustment and decentralization policies promoted during the 1990s (Cambaza, Hoogesteger and Veldwisch, 2019: 5-8). Although it is important to recognize that these large infrastructure projects were facing a lot of problems along the road, such as higher costs, corruptions, delays and more (Wiggins & Lankford, 2019: 24-25), African governments were asked to replace their infrastructure management by a water-user management model for which users would be responsible for the system management (Cambaza, Hoogesteger and Veldwisch, 2019: 6). However, as mentioned earlier such model did not offer an effective solution to the management problems.

Therefore, although the retreat of the government from the sector created an institutional void leading to the need of water provision, such void was indirectly created by international donors and multilateral organizations. In some cases, such as Nigeria,

governments have tried to come back in the sector by offering monetary support to buy small-scale pumps, but their support remains very limited and no policies and regulations (IFPRI, 2010: 3) have been really put forward to ensure African populations have a proper access to water. This situation has affected Kickstart in many ways, notably in terms of farmers' ability to acquire their pumps as financial institutions are not very present in areas where Kickstart conducts its activities and if they are, there is a high propensity that farmers will not be able to obtain a loan as a result of their inability to provide collateral, such as their land since property rights are non-existent or not efficient. Yet, Kickstart was able to come up with their own financing options to ensure smallholders farmers could access this tool for their productivity (Kickstart, 2015: 22). In sum, Kickstart relationship with host-country government was mainly characterized by an institutional void in terms water provision, but also by a lack of engagement in tackling structural barriers that hamper farmers' ability to exit poverty. However, Kickstart was able to bridge that gap and donors' governments were able to offer some financial help to farmers through their national programs. It stays nonetheless that there is still, in most cases, an absence of policies or regulations addressing structural barriers such as adapted financial institutions, that could allow farmers to secure a continuous access to water to enhance their productivity.

In regard to the relationship between Kickstart and international donors, it is possible to observe that their relationship is more sustained than the one with host-country governments. Effectively, Kickstart have mainly received funding from USAID and DFID. These funds mainly helped Kickstart to conduct their marketing and distribution strategies, which allowed the organization to overcome low-production and higher costs that a beginning business would have to face (George & Prasad, 2010: 84). Although, both these donors have also given funds for specific purposes such as the organization's activities expansion to Mali and Kenya, and for the development of a financing program for their pumps (George & Prasad, 2010: 84; USAID (A), Online). Considering every aspect that was just mentioned, it is possible to consider that Kickstart relationship with donor agencies/governments is twofold. Firstly, USAID and DFID had given Kickstart funds to expand their activities into new countries (Rogerson & *al.*, 2014: 5). Therefore, helping the organization to overcome the cost of being a first-mover firm for which the funding

encouraged the organization to enter into new markets and face information asymmetries as well as new challenges. Secondly, in regard to USAID funding for developing a financing product, it is possible to associate such funding with the market failure rationale. Effectively, since it has extensively discussed in the essay, African smallholder farmers don't have access to inclusive and adapted financial products. This situation seems to be recurrent in many African countries and is therefore attributed to the market incapacity to provide such support. Therefore, USAID was trying to mitigate the effect of such failure on the SE ability to provide their products to smallholder farmers by providing them the necessary funding to ensure they could help smallholder farmers access irrigation.

4.3 Comparative Analysis of Both Case Studies

This last section of the essay will be used to offer a comparison of both case studies in regard to their SE status and their relationships with host countries and donors' governments. This will help to answer the last question: Are there any differences between the two case studies and if yes, what could potentially explain these differences? In light of any meaningful differences, the literature review and the context will be used in order to offer plausible explanations to such differences.

While looking at each case studies, it is possible to observe differences between Hello Tractor and Kickstart regarding their alignment with literature definition. Although both organizations are considered as being social enterprises, Kickstart appears to be more focus on the social impact than Hello Tractor. Effectively, Kickstart is registered as a non-profit and therefore owners cannot benefit from profits. As for Hello Tractor, by being registered as a business, owners and investors can make profit out of their activities. However, either organization is more of a social business than the other as definitions about SEs imply a hybrid organization with social impact and business-like management, therefore allowing each business to determine which level of each component they want to put forward. Nonetheless, Kickstart might be more situated on the left side of Dees's spectrum (1998) or the side where social impact is privileged. As for Hello Tractor, it is located more towards the right side of the spectrum where business-type management and profits are privileged over social impacts. The difference between how each business balanced their

hybridity can play a large role in regard to their engagement with governments, which will be explained later. Despite that fact, it is important to mention that Hello Tractor might not have always been on the right side of the spectrum. Indeed, as it was mentioned earlier, Hello Tractor previous business plan integrated selling tractor directly to smallholder farmers and small cooperatives. However, the lack of access to credit for this part of the population made it impossible for them to pursue that original plan. As a result, Hello Tractor only kept selling their monitoring technology to already existent tractor owners, which appeared to be wealthier, reducing at the same time the impact the organization could have had on farmers access to mechanization and higher productivity. In each case, both organizations had to adapt to lack of access to finance, but each choosing a different approach. Effectively, Kickstart decided to design and latter partner with another organization to offer financial options as a way to make their products more affordable to smallholder farmers. On the other hand, Hello Tractor preferred adapting their business plan by only selling their monitoring devices, which impacted their ability to directly target and impact smallholders' lives.

In terms of each organization relationship with host-country governments, there are not a lot of differences between the two case studies since they both have seen the disengagement of governments related to the agricultural sector and its inputs (irrigation). There are, however, more differences in each organization relationship with donors' governments. Effectively, Hello Tractor has received much less donors' funding than its counterpart Kickstart. Two plausible arguments can explain this situation. The first explanation resides in Kickstart International status. Effectively, being registered as a NGO could have helped the organization to secure more funding from development agencies compared to a business that makes profits. This can be explained by the fact that as development agencies are often funded by public money the government is being held accountable regarding the money, they are investing in development projects. The fact that an enterprise can benefit from that public money to increase their profits, which mostly will not be reinvested in the community, can lead to certain disagreement on public spending from the population. On the opposite, the NGO will likely use most of the funding money to the benefits of the population in which they are implanting their project for which no additional money will

go into the NGO's pocket. Moreover, development agencies have different sets of rules and policies regarding the spending of their funding and rules to invest and provide funding to SEs might be more contingent than the ones with NGOs. The second explanation to a higher level of funding towards Kickstart resides in the fact that the organization has been active for approximately 30 years now making the organization well known and legitimate, notably by showing the important results they were able to achieve and the sustainable value chain they were able to build by selling their products. Having a proven methodology and business plan often help international donors to invest and provide funding as they know that they face lower risks in investing in such organization than to invest to newer ones. Which in revenge, Hello Tractor has only had approximately 5 years of existence and although they are present on the web, they provide very little information and data related to their social impact.

In sum, both organizations have things in common but are also very different in the ways they conduct their activities and the relationships they have with different governments. Kickstart seems, however, to be far ahead Hello Tractor in terms of results and engaging with international donors.

5 Conclusion

This essay's objective was to offer a deeper understanding of the reality of social enterprises in the field. Throughout the research, several articles about the conceptualization of SEs were found, however, few were concerning the analysis of SEs in a specific context. As the context is very important to understand social enterprises (Rivera-Santos, M. et al., 2015: 73; Warnecke, T., & Houndonougbo N. A., 2016: 367-370; Gupta, S. & Beninger S., 2015: 92), it went without saying that such research is necessary to take a deeper look at these new international development entrepreneurs.

Effectively, there is a growing buzz around social enterprises activities in developing countries and their impact of the population and on the attainment of the SDGs. Therefore, to make sure minimal mistakes are made within the development field and that vulnerable populations are not just guinea pigs of this new trend, researching and observing such

entities in action and analyzing their relations with host-country governments and international donors is important, more research, transparency and accountability from these entities are needed in order to ensure that their activities don't include negative externalities that could harm already vulnerable populations. The current essay found that, the literature has a good grasp of the concept, but that to understand each and every SE, it is important to study them separately as each of them are unique. The paper also showed that although SEs have good intentions and is on the right track, there are many improvements that need to be made, starting with their relationship with host-country governments. Effectively, NGOs have been throughout the years maintaining often deep relationship with host-country governments and as SEs can be considered half NGO half business, it is also important for them, their survival, but also for the population that they partner and maintain a good relationship with host-country governments. Their relationship with donors can also be improved in certain ways, notably by offering more transparency of data and management of their organization improving therefore their accountability to the public.

Taking that into account, it is believed that international development would gain from a partnership involving these three entities. By offering an exhaustive approach, meaning every entity would work together on a same objective, the likelihood of a sustainable impact on vulnerable populations is substantial. This is where donors' government can offer some help by firstly providing funding for SEs, but also by acting as spokesperson for SEs objectives. By that, we mean that there is a need for a greater synergy between these three entities for the benefits of vulnerable populations and such partnerships would benefit both governments and SEs.

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