

AFRICA CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE PROJECT

FOURTH PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

HILTON HOTEL – YAOUNDE, CAMEROON

17 November 2014

UPDATE ON THE ACEs

Prepared by Mrs. Brigitte Norgbey

OVERVIEW

At the last Steering Committee meeting in Lome, discussions were made regarding the project progress procedures, namely, the countries effectiveness, the endorsement of the operation manual, the declaration of intents letter, partnership agreements, the performance funding contract, capacity building for the ACEs and the finalization of the implementation plan reviews for all the ACEs together with the financial and procurement manuals. To that effect, AAU worked on a number of activities after the 3rd PSC meeting to date. The following is a brief summary of the milestones achieved since the 3rd PSC meeting.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

AAU/WB organized a number of site visits in collaboration with the subject experts who worked closely with the ACEs to assist them in moving the implementation plans towards final approval. In fact, most of the ACEs diligently revised and resubmitted their implementation plans to the respective experts for more comments and suggestions moving gradually towards full approval. To date, 14 ACEs have now been approved while the remaining 5 ACEs are working on their final revisions.

1. AGRICULTURE

The IPs of three agricultural ACEs have been approved (Benue State and University of Bayero and WAACI, University of Ghana, Legon). The other 2 agriculture ACEs are working on their final revisions.

CERSA – “Centre d’excellence régional sur les sciences aviaires” worked diligently and improved its IP. Since last meeting, CERSA submitted a revised IP twice. The last submission dated October 10, is currently under review at the WB.

The University of Abeokuta has submitted the second version of its IP.

Most agricultural ACEs have been cleared and a few of them are working to finalize their IPs.

2. HEALTH

During this reporting period, five out of six health ACEs had face to face meetings with the health expert. AAU in collaboration of the WB contracted a health expert (Dr. Michelle Niescierenko) from the Harvard Medical School, to provide technical review and feedback on how to improve the IPs of the health ACEs. Dr. Niescierenko has face to face or virtual meetings with the health ACEs that led to the final approval of the Redeemers University IP. The following are the ACEs in questions:

- **University of Benin (Nigeria)** team has a face to face meeting on 22-23 August 2014. During the work session, all sections of the IP document including overview, planned outputs, activities, results framework and detailed activity sheets were thoroughly reviewed. At the end of the exercise the CERHI team agreed to revise and resubmit the IP to the expert for further actions. To date the revised IP has been resubmitted to the expert On August 23rd with the expert’s comments shared on September 3rd.
- **Ahmadu Bello University (Nigeria)** met the expert on 25-26 August. During the two-day meeting, Dr. Niescierenko went through the entire document and identified the strengths and weaknesses of the IP. Discussions led to the budget and regional partnerships that seemed to be the problem. So, recommendations were made as to how to improve the IP. The team was required to revise the IP and resubmit it for further action. So far, the IP has been resubmitted on August 25th and expert’s comments shared on September 3rd.
- **The University of Jos (Nigeria)**, met the expert on 27-28 August 2014. Discussions were held on the development objectives and their indicators as well as the disbursement linked indicators and the disbursement linked results in addition to planned outputs, detailed budget, activities sheets and regional and international partnerships. Based on the feedback provided

UNJOS will revise its IP to ensure all comments are incorporated. Since that meeting, the revised IP has been resubmitted. The expert's comments have been shared on September 3rd.

- **Redeemer's University (Nigeria)**, met with the expert on 29-30 August 2014. For Redeemer's University, the discussions were held on video-conference. The discussions were largely focused on a few items related to ACEGID's disbursement linked indicators, detailed activity sheets and costs. The revised document has been sent to the expert with comments shared on September 3rd and full approval of the IP.
- **University Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal)** – As a follow up to the August face to face meeting, recommendations were made for the team to revise the implementation plan and resubmit it for further action. The revised document was submitted to the expert for comments and suggestions. This time, Dr. Niescierenko worked with two other experts, namely, Dr. Ok Pannenburg, from the World Bank Health consultant, and Prof, Newar Tewfik a health expert from the University of Sherbrook, Quebec. After discussions, and deliberations, the experts recommended a second face to face meeting. The meeting took place on 21-24 October 2014. It was a four-day meeting giving the UCAD team the opportunity to fine tune its IP and to narrow the scope of the project while aligning UCAD's objectives to those of the World Bank. The working session mainly focused on the development objectives, as well as planned outputs, partnerships, governance procedures and matching the activities with the disbursement linked indicators and the disbursement linked results. At the end of the four day meeting, a lot of progress was made, but more work still remained to be done. The UCAD team promised to work quickly and resubmit a fourth draft by mid-November.

3. STEM

- The STEM expert, Professor Idris Assani, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the WB Education Specialist, Ms. Himdat Bayusuf, have been working with the ACEs. The following IPs have been approved (2iE of Burkina, AUST of Nigeria), pending Abomey, Calavi CETIC – Cameroon, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Nigeria. Final comments and revisions from KNUST and UGB are being made. Most of the remaining have submitted at least their fourth IP reviews for comments/ suggestions.

- **The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana (KNUST)** submitted its fourth IP for review on October 15th awaiting final approval.
- **The University of Abomey Calavi, Benin (UAC)** submitted its fourth IP review on August 26 and the last comments shared with them by the WB dated October 15, 2014.
- **The University of Yaoundé 1 (CETIC)** received the comments of its fourth IP review on September 25. Additional documents and teams activity lists etc...were requested and submitted in October.

OPERATIONS MANUAL

The English and French versions have been circulated to all participating countries on September 5, 2014 for their review and adoption. To date, the manual has been adopted by all countries except Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal.

The French version is currently being edited and the final version will be circulated in due course.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT MANUAL

The Fiduciary Manuals (FM) have been approved for all ACEs except those for UGB, Yaoundé1 and l'Université de Lomé that are undergoing final reviews. Mr. Mamadou Fall, an FM consultant working with UGB to finalize fiduciary manual for approval. He completed a support mission to UGB in November, Final manual to be submitted in November.

PROCUREMENT MANUAL

In anticipation of the fact that the ACEs would be requiring expert advice on procurement issues during the life of the project, AAU has recruited a part-time Procurement Specialist, Mr. Amadou SECK. He is currently working with Togo in the development of its procurement manual. In fact, Mr. Seck will be available during the ACE workshop giving him the opportunity to engage with other ACEs who might need assistance. The Procurement Manuals (PM) have been approved for all ACEs except l'Université Gaston Berger (Senegal), l'Université d'Abomey-Calavi (Benin), l'Université Yaoundé1 (Cameroon) and l'Université de Lomé that are at their final reviews. Mr. Mamadou Fall, an FM consultant working with UGB to finalize procurement manual for approval. He completed a support mission to UGB in November. Final manual to be submitted in November.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) consultancy advertisement has been sent out again in order to competitively recruit an M&E firm to work on the monitoring and evaluation aspect of the ACE project. Not very many responses have been received. To date, only 2 responses have been received.

The ACEs have been asked to submit updated Results Framework with year 1 data showing most recent numbers as of October 30th to the AAU Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Mrs. Adeline Addy, to allow her to put them together into aggregated RF.

CAPACITY BUILDING

As discussed during the last PSC meeting, AAU proposed a few capacity building topics and asked members to provide additional topics of interest for prioritization.

The following table summarizes the responses.

| NUMBER OF ACEs | TOPICS PROPOSED |
|----------------|---|
| 8 | Effective Project Management |
| 7 | Administrative/Financial Management/Disbursement/Internal Control |
| 6 | Monitoring & Evaluation |
| 6 | Project Sustainability & Fundraising |
| 4 | Procurement Procedures & Control Management |
| 2 | Grant Management |
| 1 | Bandwidth Improvement Strategy |
| 1 | Project Impact Assessment |
| 1 | Project Reporting |

From the information received, the most popular topic was Effective Project Management because 8 ACEs chose that topic. Consequently, AAU proposes that the First ACE Capacity Building Workshop be on the topic Effective Project Management. A couple of other topics too are being considered, namely: Leadership Development in Higher Education, Leadership Development for Post Conflict Countries.

ACE EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK ON ABUJA WORKSHOPA total of 38 Anglophones and 9 Francophone responded to the survey, namely 36% of the participants. Overall, respondents rated positively most of the survey question. However, since less of 40% of the participants responded, the survey results may not representative of the members. Therefore, a slightly different method should be used for future evaluation in order to encourage a large number

of workshop participants to respond to the questionnaire. Please refer to the survey results report for more details.

CONCLUSION

All the ACEs have made substantial progress since last meeting. The majority of the ACEs finalized the IP reviews with 5 remaining. Most of the ACEs met the effective condition requirements and fiduciary and procurement manuals have been developed and cleared by the WB for most of the ACEs. A few of the ACEs have started implementing their project activities awaiting the disbursement of the Year1 funds. Hopefully, funds will be released soon to allow the full implementation of the project.