

**AFRICA CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT
(ACE IMPACT)
MINUTES OF FIRST PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**February 18, 2019
Djibouti Palace Kempinski Hotel, Djibouti**

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Dr. Fahmi Ahmed (Chair, Djibouti)
2. Prof. Mohammed Salifu (Ghana)
3. Prof. Ramané Kaboré (Burkina Faso)
4. Dr. Joshua Atah (Nigeria)
5. Prof. Aminata Sall Diallo (Senegal)
6. Prof. Mamadou Saliou Diallo (Guinée)
7. Mr. Abdoulie T. B. Jarra (The Gambia)
8. Prof. Fulgence Nindjin (Côte d’Ivoire)
9. Prof. Aboubakar Marcos (Benin)
10. Prof. Kouami Kokou (Togo)
11. Barry Emmanuel (UEMOA)
12. Prof. Habibou Abarchi (Niger)
13. Mr. Henry Edjo Nkoto (Cameroon)

MEMBERS ABSENT

IN ATTENDANCE

Focal Points, World Bank, AAU and Others

1. Prof. N’goh Bakayoko (Côte d’Ivoire)
2. Mrs. Benedicta Rose Houtechenou (Benin)
3. Mr. Yusupha Touray (The Gambia)
4. Mr. Alangdong Edmund (Ghana)
5. Ms. Meskerem Lily Mulatu (Practice Manager, Education, World Bank)
6. Mr. Andreas Blom (ACE Impact Task Team Leader (TTL), World Bank)
7. Mrs. Himdat Bayusuf (ACE I Task Team Leader, World Bank)
8. Dr. Ekuia Bentil (ACE Impact Co- Task Team Leader, World Bank)
9. Dr. Graham Harrison (Senior Science and Technology Specialist, World Bank)

10. Mrs. Eunice Ackwerh (Senior Education Specialist, World Bank, Country Co TTL, Ghana)
11. Dr. Moustapha Lo (M&E Specialist, World Bank Office, Senegal)
12. Mr. Assane Dieng (Education Specialist, World Bank, Guinée)
13. Ms. M'Bahly Maud- Andree Kouadio IV (Consultant, World Bank)
14. Dr. Valérie Tehio (Head of Education, Agence Français de Développement)
15. Dr. Quentin Delpech (Task Team Leader – Lead Expert Higher Education, Agence Français de Développement)
16. Prof. Etienne E. Ehile (Secretary General, AAU)
17. Prof. Jonathan Mba (Director of Programmes/Coordinator, ACE Project, AAU)
18. Ms. Nodumo Dhlamini (Director, ICT& Knowledge Management, AAU)
19. Mr. Maxwell Amo-Hoyte (Director of Finance, AAU)
20. Mr. Abednego Corletey (IT Specialist, AAU)
21. Mrs. Adeline Addy (M&E Specialist, AAU)
22. Mrs. Gabrielle Hansen (Logistics Officer, AAU)
23. Ms. Millicent Afriyie Kyei (Communications Assistant, AAU)

INTRODUCTION

1. The first ACE Impact Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting was held on February 18, 2019, in Djibouti at the Djibouti Palace Kempinski hotel. The meeting's objective was to discuss preparation of the ACE Impact project. Agenda items included: Review of previous PSC Minutes; ACE Impact preparation updates; AFD support; Update on RFU activities; Overview of ACE Impact Bootcamp activities; Country updates and the Next Steps.

WELCOME ADDRESS

2. The meeting opened with remarks from the Chair, Prof. Fahmi Ahmed; the AAU Secretary General, Prof. Etienne Ehile; AFD representative, Dr. Valerie Tehio; World Bank Education Practice Manager, Ms Meskerem Lily Mulatu; and the ACE Impact Task Team Leader at the World Bank, Mr. Andreas Blom.

REVIEW OF MINISTERIAL MEETING MINUTES

3. Some key decisions made were reaffirmed and a few corrections and suggestions were also made from the previous minutes. The meeting endorsed AAU as the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) of the ACE Impact Project. It was also noted that the ACE selection procedure, the five presentations, and introductory remarks that were omitted should be included. Other corrections included: Poultry Science should be translated correctly in the French version of the Minutes; 'University of Ouagadougou' should be replaced with 'University of Ouaga I'. It was requested that, subsequent minutes should be more detailed and comprehensive.

Decisions/Resolutions

- **Subsequent Minutes to be more detailed and comprehensive**

OVERALL ACE IMPACT UPDATES

4. Presentation on ACE Impact focused on the status of Phases I and II, preparation support to the Centres and the next steps. ACE Impact I (Phase I) includes 16 ACEs (6 renewals and 10 new ACEs), two (2) Emerging Centres and three (3) Colleges of Engineering across five (5) countries (Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Ghana, Guinea, and Senegal). There will also be two National Facilitation Agencies, National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) of Ghana and Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation –

Project Implementation Unit (MERSRI-PIU) of Burkina Faso. All safeguards, fiduciary requirements and negotiations for this phase have been completed.

5. ACE Impact II (Phase II) involves 28 ACEs (12 renewals and 16 new centres), three (3) Emerging Centres and three (3) to six (6) Colleges of Engineering with one National Facilitation Agency, which is the National Universities Commission (NUC) of Nigeria. Participating countries include Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria, The Gambia and Togo. Although experts have been assigned to the centres, fiduciary assessments, technical discussions and negotiations are yet to be completed. Clear next steps on ACE Impact II will be communicated following the World Bank Board of Directors approval of ACE Impact I.

Decisions/Resolutions

- **Fiduciary assessments, technical discussions and negotiations should be completed.**
6. As part of ACE Impact Project preparations, experts have been assigned to work with centers, especially in the development of their Implementation Plans. Governments were charged to assist the new centres to learn from the existing centres through workshops. They are also expected to endorse the Procurement, Financial and Project Operations Manuals, review workplans, fiduciary audits, performances and Implementation Plans, as well as setting up functional National Steering Committees. Centres were further encouraged to stay focused on details of next steps of getting ready, especially on the DLI 1 (Institutional Readiness).
 7. A brief overview and status of the PASET RSIF was given. However, detailed discussions on the subject was slated for Thursday February 21, 2019 during parallel sessions.
 8. The World Bank was requested to circulate details of the DLIs to help centres prepare for the task ahead. Assurance was given that, the country level DLI funds allocation tables for ACE Impact II countries will be circulated soon. The Bank was asked to make room for adjustments and amendment of the DLIs. Also, enquiries were made on selection criteria for categorization of countries into Phases I and II and the conditions for first disbursement. The World Bank explained that the categorization was because participating countries were not at the same level of readiness on the basis of necessary documentation for project take-off.
 9. To avoid confusion and for easy identification, it was recommended to rename 'ACE Impact Phase I and II' as First ACE Impact and Second ACE Impact. Furthermore, there was a discussion that in the French translations of the title, the name "African" should be replaced by "Africa".

Decisions/Resolutions

- World Bank to circulate details of DLIs.
- Rename ‘ACE Impact Phase I and II’ as First ACE Impact and Second ACE Impact.
- AAU to complete the Operational Manual by end of March and the DLI table will be shared with the PSC Members.
- The World Bank to complete fiduciary assessments, technical discussions and negotiations.

THE AFD SUPPORT

10. The AFD’s support will cover three countries (Cote d’Ivoire, Benin and Nigeria) and target STEM, Environment and Education ACEs, Emerging Centres and Colleges of Engineering. Additionally, they will focus on technical expertise and networking among centres and the private sector for impact and visibility and presented a proposal to the PSC. The following timelines were emphasized: AFD Board approval (Early July), workshop for centres and start of the programme (November 19), Expression of Interest in Networking and Partnerships (January 20 -June 20) and final agreements for technical experts in December 21.
11. The Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) has been chosen by the AFD as its Regional Facilitation Unit responsible for the technical support and networking among the ACEs. AUF will be tasked with: Calls and examination of requests for technical support and proposals for networking, contracts with technical experts; network activities funding; assessment and report. With regard to Management of the Programme, the AUF will liaise with the AAU. Concerns were raised on the potential roles AFD wants AUF to play since those roles are part of the functions of AAU as the ACE Impact Regional Facilitation Unit. Senegal suggested that AFD should give the money to AAU to fund experts who are supporting the ACEs. The AFD was asked to clarify what it wants to do because if other funding agencies that will later join the project will also come up with their Regional Facilitation Units tasked with doing part of the duties of AAU, confusion will be the result.

Decisions/Resolutions

- **Decisions on AFD’s proposal on technical support and networking were postponed for further discussion at a later PSC meeting.**

UPDATE ON RFU ACTIVITIES

12. The Regional Facilitation Unit, presented its workplan for the Project from February-December 2019 which included recruitment of ACE Impact Project Manager, M&E

Assistant, Procurement Specialist, Safeguards Specialists and Short-term consultant to revise the Environment and Social Safeguards Framework.¹

13. AAU will also support the ACEs in development of their Implementation Plans using subject matter experts, National Review Meetings, Monitoring, Evaluation, Verification and Supervision mission. Other activities will include completion of Phase II of the digital reporting system (the MEL system) in collaboration with the ACE at the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin, and facilitation of M&E training for new ACEs, website development and maintenance and communications.

14. The Financial performance report was also presented. It was explained that over expenditure on ACE Impact selection process was as a result of increased number of experts and its associated cost.² It was concluded that, the AAU was to present a tentative budget for the Committee's approval. The AAU was also advised that the budget should be realistic to avoid over expenditure. It was also recommended that, the AAU should do a self-assessment for improvement of delivery.

Decisions/Resolutions

- **AAU to present this initial year's tentative annual budget with a detailed annual workplan for the Committee's approval as well as a detailed multi-year budget and annual workplan capturing the period of implementation of the project.**

ACE BOOTCAMP AGENDA

15. The objectives of the Bootcamp were to enhance the centres' understanding of the Project; give information on roles of the stakeholders involved; forge partnerships among the centres; focus on student centredness and sustainability of the Project and assist centres to draft feasible Implementation Plans. Apart from plenary sessions on the above, parallel sessions on Monitoring and Evaluation, Procurement and Financial Management were to be held.

NATIONAL UPDATES

16. Niger: The country has one Centre of Excellence in animal production and two Emerging Centers, one in Mining and the other in Teaching/Learning of Mathematics and the

¹ The draft is depending World Bank's approval.

² Some experts had to stay on after the desk evaluations for the site evaluations and this also had its cost implications.

Sciences. The objective will be to increase enrollment progressively and develop human resource for the continent.

- 17. The Gambia:** The Emerging Center will focus on Civil, Air and Mechanical Engineering and to primarily address graduate unemployment.
- 18. Cote d'Ivoire:** The ACE Impact project would be a great opportunity to demonstrate efforts shown in ACE I. Lessons have been learnt and the country looks forward to the AFD (which is funding the ACEs in the country), and AAU's assistance in strengthening this project.
- 19. Nigeria:** Centres will be prepared for the take off of ACE Impact. Lessons learnt from ACE I will help with the mandate to educate the centers, especially the new centres on what they need to know and do. Centres will also be assisted in addressing various challenges being faced.
- 20. Ghana:** There are eight Centres of Excellence under the ACE Impact Project. At the preparatory stage, the three renewed centres, which are also among the best performing ACE I centers, will serve as a case study for the new ones.
- 21. Senegal:** There are four centres and preparations for the take-off of these centres are at an advanced stage. Technical discussions are ongoing and relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of Economics and Finance are actively involved.
- 22. Djibouti:** The Project serves as a catalyst for economic renaissance to satisfy the country's economic development. Specifically, the emerging centre will help resolve issues of human capital and unemployment to accelerate economic development.
- 23. Togo:** There are three (3) centres of excellence (one renewal and two new centres). The government is ready to support them and assist in addressing any challenges they may encounter.
- 24. Guinea:** This is an opportunity to benefit from two experiences: as an emerging centre and as a centre of excellence. The Project will focus on health and mining and seek to explore partnerships with some of the well performing ACEs.
- 25. Benin:** There are two centres of excellence (one renewal and one new ACE). Funding has been secured from ISD and efforts will be made to mobilize more resources. Focus will also be given to drafting of the Implementation Plan.

26. Burkina Faso: There are three centres of excellence, (1 renewal, 2 new centres) specializing in Engineering and Health. It is intended to improve higher education in Burkina Faso through the implementation of the Project.

27. Cameroon: The country is up-to-date on all documentations for ACE Impact and the government pledges its constant support to the project.

NEXT STEPS

28. Next steps for the Project includes: the completion of financial agreements, approval of Project documents and arrangement for flow of funds. The details are outlined in the table below.

No.	Actions	Date	Responsible
1	Submission of ACE Impact I to World Bank Board for approval	Mar. 6, 2019	World Bank
2	National Workshops Period: National Government feedback on draft Procurement Manuals (PM), Financial Management (FM) Manuals and Implementation Plans (IP)	Mar. 4-31, 2019	Governments
3	Governments share draft Performance and Funding Agreement with World Bank for legal review	Mar. 29, 2019	Governments
4	Project Operations Manual updated	Mar. 31, 2019	AAU
5	Revised versions of IPs, fiduciary manuals submitted to AAU for review/approval	Apr. 1, 2019	ACEs/Governments
6	AAU notifies each Center on IP, manuals (PM, FM) and Safeguards approval, or request for additional work	Apr. 12, 2019	AAU
7	Anticipated signing of Financing Agreements for Phase 1 countries by World Bank and Governments.	Apr. 14, 2019	World Bank/ Governments
8	Legal review of Performance and Funding Agreement completed and shared with governments	Apr. 15, 2019	World Bank
9	Performance and Funding Agreement signing between governments and the Centers	Apr. 30, 2019	Governments
10	Submission by Centers of all ACE Impact documents not yet approved (manuals and IPs) and remaining results for DLI 1 (Basic and Full readiness) to AAU for approval/verification	Apr. 30, 2019	ACEs/Governments
11	Project preparation support mission to select ACEs	May 2019	AAU/ World Bank
12	Governments of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal and Icipe sign RSIF Subsidiary Agreements	May 1, 2019	Governments (Burkina, Ghana, Senegal)/Icipe

13	All Centers' IP, manuals (PM, FM) have been approved and returned to the Centers by AAU as well as all other DLI results verified	May 15, 2019	AAU
14	Flow of funds are operational (Opening of accounts for Centers and national facilitation agencies)	Jul. 1, 2019	ACEs/Governments
15	Access to WB client connection (WB on-line disbursement portal, Authorized signatures etc.)	Jul. 1, 2019	ACEs/Governments
16	Project Effectiveness (all conditions in the Financing Agreement met and, in some cases, cabinet or parliament approval needed) – 90 days after signing	Jul. 15, 2019	Governments/ACEs
17	Next Regional Workshop	Sep. 23-27, 2019	AAU/World Bank
18	Communication on timelines for ACE Impact II	April 2019	World Bank

CLOSING

The Chair extended his gratitude to all members for their commitment. The meeting ended around 6:00pm and it was agreed that the next meeting would be held in Dakar, Senegal during the next Project Regional Workshop to be held on September 23-28, 2019.