

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

**23 September 2019
World Bank Office, Dakar, Senegal**

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Prof. Coumba Touré Kane (Chair, Senegal)
2. Prof. Ramané Kaboré (Burkina Faso)
3. Mrs. Bénédicte Houetchenou (Benin)
4. Dr. Henry Nkoto (Cameroon)
5. Dr. Fahmi Ahmed (Djibouti)
6. Mr. Abdoulie Jarra (Gambia)
7. Prof. Mohammed Salifu (Ghana)
8. Prof. Mamadou Saliou Diallo (Guinea)
9. Prof. Habibou Abarchi (Niger)
10. Dr. Joshua Atah (Nigeria)
11. Prof. Kwami Kokou¹ (Togo)
12. Dr. Emmanuel Barry (UEMOA)
13. Dr. Didier Acouetey (Private Sector)

MEMBERS ABSENT

With Apologies

1. Prof. Messanvi Gbeassor (Togo)
2. Prof. Fulgence Nindjin (Côte d'Ivoire)

IN ATTENDANCE

World Bank, AFD, AAU & Others

1. Ms. Himdat Bayusuf (First ACE Impact Task Team Leader, Education Specialist, World Bank)
2. Dr. Ekuia Bentil (Second ACE Impact Task Team Leader, World Bank)
3. Dr. Graham Harrison (Senior Science & Technology Specialist, World Bank)
4. Dr. Moustapha Lo (Education Specialist, World Bank, Senegal)
5. Mrs. Eunice Ackwerh (Senior Education Specialist, World Bank, Ghana)
6. Ms. Maud Kouadio IV (Consultant, World Bank, Washington)
7. Ms. Rim Wazni (Consultant, World Bank, Senegal)
8. Ms. Véronique Sauvat (Head, Education Department, Agence Française de Développement)

¹ Representing Prof. Gbeassor (Togo)

9. Dr. Quentin Delpech (Task Team Leader – Lead Expert Higher Education, Agence Française de Développement)
10. Prof. N'goh Bakayoko (Côte d'Ivoire)
11. Prof. Etienne Ehilé (Secretary General, AAU)
12. Prof. Jonathan Mba (Coordinator, ACE I project, AAU)
13. Ms. Nodumo Dhlamini (Director, ICT & Knowledge Management, AAU)
14. Mr. Maxwell Amo-Hoyte (Director of Finance, AAU)
15. Mrs. Adeline Addy (M&E Specialist, AAU)
16. Mr. Abednego Corlety (Procurement/ IT Specialist, AAU)
17. Ms. Millicent Kyei (Communications Officer, AAU)
18. Mrs. Yvette Quashie (Logistics Officer, AAU)
19. Mr. Frank Adjei – Senior (Accountant, AAU)
20. Prof. Amadou Abdoul Sow (Focal Point, Senegal)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Second ACE Impact Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting was held on September 23, 2019 at the World Bank Offices in Dakar, Senegal. The objectives of the meeting were as follows; assessing the progress made in the implementation of the First and Second ACE Impact projects, obtaining updates on the complementary support by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), progress made by the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) in coordinating activities and annual workplan, status of the digitised monitoring and evaluation system, reviews by project participating countries and next steps. The meeting agenda is attached as [Annex 1](#). The Committee was adequately represented with 12 out of the 15 members present.

OPENING

2. The Chairperson of the meeting, Prof. Coumba Touré Kane of Senegal welcomed all members present. Follow-up remarks from Prof. Etienne Ehilé, Secretary General, Association of African Universities thanked the World Bank for the investment in ACE 1 and subsequently, the ACE Impact projects. In his remarks he pointed out that the performance of the ACE I project paved the way for the ACE Impact. He called on ACE I centres, particularly those renewed under the ACE Impact project to use the lessons learned to advance the objectives of the new projects. He further encouraged the new centres to capitalise on the experiences of existing ACEs. Ultimately, the expected results of these centres would be significant and achieved over the five-year period.
3. Ms. Véronique Sauvat, a representative of the AFD thanked organizers of the meeting and all members present. She made special mention of the World Bank, Prof. EE. Ehilé and Prof. Kane Coumba Toure for their respective roles in the ACE Impact projects. She attributed the active participation of members to the relevance of the projects' objectives, notably, capacity strengthening and promotion of development-oriented research. She shared the AFD's commitment to the ACE Impact projects particularly because they align with the Agency's education agenda. She further informed the meeting that US\$ 6 million is available from AFD funding to cover activities that will promote networking and intensify partnerships among the ACEs.
4. Dr. Hamoud Abdel Wedoud Kamil, World Bank Senior Education Specialist (Senegal) thanked the PSC for its support, and the Government of Senegal for the commitment to the projects. He informed participants that the achievements of the project were a result of the hard work by all stakeholders. He reflected on key lessons that emerged from ACE I implementation and noted that collaboration and partnership have been crucial for the success of the projects. Dr. Kamil also advised that going forward, the collaboration between the AAU and AFD will be key for achieving regional collaboration and the objectives of the ACE Impact projects. He called for the continued support of the PSC and hoped that the regional technical workshop following the completion of the PSC meeting would serve as a platform for peer learning and experience sharing.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

5. The meeting agenda was confirmed and approved by all members (See [Annex 1](#)).

REVIEW OF MINUTES OF First PSC MEETING

6. The AAU raised concerns about its role within the implementation arrangement of the AFD regional technical support (a regional grant), noting the discussion was yet to be finalized. However, the World Bank informed the Committee that a virtual meeting of the PSC had been held on April 24, 2019 to discuss the issue. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Rasheed (Nigeria) and also discussed recruitment of the Project Manager. The minutes of the virtual meeting are available but are yet to be shared with the PSC. It was agreed the virtual meeting minutes would be shared for information and feedback. AFD's support through the regional grant was endorsed in principle. The PSC recommended that the AFD and AAU hold further discussions on clarifying the implementation arrangement of the AFD and AAU due to its technical nature. Subsequently, the two organizations held discussions on the way forward. The PSC members at the virtual meeting agreed to share the details of the AFD regional support with their ACEs and provide feedback. AFD subsequently shared the concept note with the PSC members by email and received several feedback/comments from the PSC members which have been incorporated in the current concept of the support. (See Paragraphs 10-11 below for further input from AFD on the matter)

Decision/Resolution

- **AAU to share the minutes of the virtual PSC meeting referenced in paragraph 6 above.**
- **AFD and AAU will continue further discussions on any other pending implementation arrangements and incorporate the details into the operations manual**

STATUS OF First ACE IMPACT (Effectiveness), Second ACE IMPACT (Negotiations) AND READINESS OF CENTERS

7. A presentation by the RFU reported good progress on the signing of Financing Agreements noting all First ACE Impact countries have signed with the exception of Ghana which is also close to signing, having obtained the approval of the Cabinet and Parliament. A model of the performance and funding agreement (PFA) had been developed and shared. The World Bank has cleared the draft PFAs for Burkina Faso, Ghana and Guinea and final versions are being prepared for signature. Other requirements for effectiveness including legal opinions on the PFAs and the Financing Agreements, parliamentary approvals (where applicable), and set up of national review committees are at various stages of completion. For the Second ACE Impact, World Bank negotiations with AAU and all countries have been scheduled for the First and Second weeks of October 2019. The expected World Bank Board of Directors approval of Second ACE Impact is on November 26, 2019. Several technical discussions had already been held with all countries ahead of the negotiations. The status of the submission of requirements for institutional readiness (under DLI 1) by the centers was positive. Further details were provided on World Bank and RFU technical/implementation support to the ACEs. Deadlines for effectiveness, submission of

institutional readiness requirements, signing of the PASET-RSIF subsidiary agreements and related legal opinions (by Ghana, Burkina Faso, Benin and Nigeria), among others were outlined for both the First and Second ACE Impact projects.

8. The AAU was tasked to update the institutional readiness submission information and to provide clear communication guidelines for the submission of DLI 1 requirements. The World Bank emphasised the need to strengthen communication between experts, the Bank the RFU and centres.

Decision/Resolution

- **AAU to update DLI 1 submission status information**
- **AAU to provide communication guidelines for DLI 1 and other results submissions**

INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

9. A presentation by the World Bank on institutional advancement emphasized the importance of relationships that advance the mission of universities. Marketing and Recruitment, Communications and Brand Management, Institutional Partnerships, Alumni Relations, Development (fundraising) and Advancement Services were mentioned as vehicles for institutional advancement. Discussions highlighted the need to leverage these to build new partnerships. Given the importance of the subject, the upcoming workshop would have sessions on institutional impact and discuss how institutional heads can be supported to develop strategies for collaboration and partnerships. The PSC was informed that there are funds available under the project to facilitate this. To promote collaboration, study tours were organized under the project to China, Korea, India and Germany. Examples were given of partnerships arising from these interactions.

AFD SUPPORT

10. The AFD representative explained that the AFD support is two-fold; one being the regional grant (PARTNER project) and the other being financial support to Cote d'Ivoire ACE Impact and co-financing with the World Bank on the Benin and Nigeria ACE Impact projects. The regional PARTNER project support is to promote research and teaching related partnerships between ACEs with common themes namely, *Sustainable Mining, Sustainable Water Management, Digital Sciences and Health*. The selection of these networks was informed by the number of centres within each theme, existing collaboration and advance work within the networks following the Djibouti meetings. Each thematic area would be supported to the tune of MEUR 1.4 to cover bursary, technical support and workshop related expenses. *The Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)* would oversee implementation, supervision and reporting on achievements of the networks. Next steps would include development of workplans for each network, recruitment of coordinators, appraisal by the AFD Board and formal launch in February 2020.

11. Discussions noted the highlights of AAU/AFD interactions following the virtual PSC meeting in April 2019, including key points and agreements reached so far. The AFD noted they have chosen to work with the IRD instead of the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF). The IRD would report to the AFD as the funding partner and submit written reports to the ACE Impact PSC via the AAU. These and other arrangements had been detailed in a Concept Note shared with the PSC following the virtual PSC meeting. Both the World Bank and AAU endorsed the principle of the PARTNER project support, as defined in the concept note. Several PSC members have already shared comments that have been incorporated into the concept note of the PARTNER project. The AAU was asked to reshare the document given a few PSC members reported they did not receive the concept note when it was initially circulated. Following incorporation of these second round of comments from the PSC members, the PSC will have the opportunity to formally endorse the concept note.
12. In relation to AFD's funding to Benin, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire centers, concerns were raised regarding how project implementation would be synchronised. Of particular interest was how reporting would be managed for centres funded by both the World Bank and the AFD (as is the case for Benin and Nigeria). The AFD and World Bank co-financing arrangements are clarified in *Annex 8* of the Second ACE Impact project appraisal document. The AFD co-funding to Benin and Nigeria would be availed as part of the Second ACE Impact and will be disbursed based on achievement and verification of DLIs and via the World Bank. Verification of results for Benin, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire would also be done via the World Bank's grant to the RFU.

Decision/Resolution

AAU to reshare the AFD Concept Note on the PARTNER project given some PSC members did not previously receive it due to technical challenges in the email list serve.

UPDATE ON RFU ACTIVITIES

RFU Workplan

13. The RFU presented a work plan of activities for the period August 2019 – July 2020 with clear tasks, timelines and budget. Planned activities will focus on coordination and organisation of meetings; monitoring and evaluation support for individual centres and the entire project; communication and publicity; capacity building for both the RFU and ACEs; support for networking and partnerships; and, project management and implementation support. The World Bank assured the PSC that the work plan and its associated costs had been carefully reviewed prior to the meeting. The Bank commended the RFU for a concise but very clear and detailed workplan which allows for better appreciation of the RFU's planned activities.

Decision/Resolution

- **AAU to send the workplan document to the PSC members for input**

RFU Financial Report and Budget

14. Budget for the reporting period (July 2018 – June 2019) was US\$ 1,500,000 while total funds received was US\$ 1,499,980. Expenditure for the period covered costs related to proposal evaluation, project readiness, monitoring and evaluation, and RFU activities and totalled US\$ 1, 499,980. In response to concerns about the 43% budget overspend, the RFU explained that some budget lines had been merged. Responding to concerns about the significant over expenditure on the Djibouti regional meeting, the World Bank explained that it had reviewed and approved the costs because the extra time in Djibouti was necessary. The RFU raised concerns about increasing payments to subject matter experts and requested the PSC to pronounce on the new pay policy. The World Bank explained there has been a significant scale up of the number of experts and their involvement to ensure quick start-up of the projects and to avoid repetition of the long delays experienced under ACE I and to align with the increase in the number of centers being supported under ACE Impact. Additionally, unit costs have not increased, and the proposed visits will focus largely on new centres. The World Bank observed that with proper planning and the introduction of six-month special service agreements (SSAs) related costs will be better managed. The PSC also recommended that the experts' performance should be evaluated to ensure value for money.
15. It was explained verification-related costs had been scaled down by engaging only one agency for verification of student and research results. The Bank confirmed the PSC endorses the RFU's annual budget. However, the PSC suggested an updated workplan and budget that reflects more accurately the planned activities of the RFU be shared with the PSC for their endorsement by email. On a positive note, the PSC was informed that the RFU financial report was received a week ahead of the meeting and shared for feedback. The AAU was asked to review its email distribution lists to ensure project communication gets to all PSC members. Additionally, the Chair asked that all the meeting documents be reshared with the Committee.

Decision/Resolution

- **AAU/WB to evaluate performance of subject matter experts**
- **PSC to endorse updated ACE Impact budget and workplan once shared by AAU**
- **AAU to review and update PSC email distribution lists**
- **AAU to reshare all the meeting documents with the PSC**

DIGITISATION

16. The RFU status report on a proposed monitoring and evaluation digital reporting system, noted the different phases of the project; considerations based on lessons from ACE I; what has been completed so far; main features; the hardware and underlying programmes; and

the next steps. In discussions, the PSC noted that in parallel, systems should be digitised in participant universities. Additionally, the PSC advised that the RFU should ensure the system under development is compatible with existing university systems. The RFU will explore the possibility of integrating the system with existing university systems. Overall, the PSC was happy with the initiative and endorsed execution of the subsequent phases.

COUNTRY ROUND TABLE

17. **Benin:** All requirements for institutional readiness have been submitted to the RFU with a transmittal letter from the Ministry of Higher Education.
18. **Burkina Faso:** It was noted all steps towards effectiveness have been met and required documentation submitted for all three (3) centres. Implementation has been postponed to mid October 2019, but all is on course.
19. **Côte d'Ivoire:** The RFU was asked to organise capacity building for the centre leaders and also to review communication lists to avoid negative impact on project implementation.
20. **Djibouti:** In spite of earlier challenges, steps towards project effectiveness are on course and progress on institutional readiness is positive.
21. **Guinea:** The representative noted that though new on the project, government commitment is very high. Technical assistance was needed during the first four months to address some challenges. On DLI 1 requirements, work is ongoing, and drafts have been shared with the World Bank country office to ensure they are adequate; and annexes for the legal opinion document are being finalised.
22. **Gambia:** Negotiations between the Government and the World Bank have been scheduled for October 2-3, 2019.
23. **Ghana:** For Ghana, all procurement contracts have been cleared and the legal opinion is awaited. All requirements for institutional readiness have been submitted for all the 9 centres.
24. **Niger:** Requirements for institutional readiness (including project management certification) have been submitted and feedback is expected; an expert has been assigned to the centres but is yet to link up; the RFU has been duly informed but is yet to respond.
25. **Nigeria:** There is good progress towards reaching effectiveness; technical discussions, safeguard assessments and set up of project teams have been completed;
26. **Senegal:** Institutional readiness requirements have been submitted for all 4 centres; the procedure manuals are same for the 3 centres under UCAD to avoid duplication of efforts and associated costs.

27. **Togo:** Documentation on institutional readiness will be validated and then submitted; a national review committee meeting was held to review progress; availability of experts is a challenge; and the RFU's assistance will be crucial.
28. **World Bank:** The World Bank briefly introduced a new World Bank sponsored higher education project on Advanced Digital Skills for Africa's Transformation (ADSAT). The ADSAT project will aim at building the advanced digital skills necessary to help Africa compete within the Fourth Industrial Revolution and are critical in addressing the region's development challenges. ADSAT will focus on undergraduate degree programs in computer science and engineering (and limited Masters and PhD support) and will include application of artificial intelligence, internet of things, big data analytics, robotics, etc. which are useful across various sectors. The new project will support selected universities across Africa. Interested countries can reach out to the World Bank team (Ekua Bentil ebentil@worldbank.org) for additional information.

Decision/Resolution

- **AAU to provide capacity building and other technical assistance for Centre leaders (particularly in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo)**
- **AAU to respond to Niger on issues relating to assistance** from Subject-matter experts

NEXT STEPS

29. For the First ACE Impact, the World Bank noted priority would be to get all centres effective and disbursed by December 30, 2019. Immediately, the Bank was hopeful Burkina Faso negotiations and effectiveness arrangements will close in a week's time and ahead of the October 8 due date. Signing of subsidiary agreements between selected countries and the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) on the PASET-RSIF is also planned.
30. Negotiations with Second ACE Impact countries is expected to close by October 10, 2019 and the project approved by the World Bank Board of Directors latest November 26, 2019. Disbursement of funds will then follow in June 2020 after completion of all necessary financial management actions. Second ACE Impact centres were encouraged to work on their DLI 1 documentation which will be verified by November 30, 2019. A joint ACE I and ACE Impact Regional Workshop will be held in Abuja (Nigeria) in February 2020.

Decision/Resolution

- **The next joint ACE I and ACE Impact Regional Workshop and PSC meetings for both projects will be held in Abuja, Nigeria.**

CLOSING

31. The PSC meeting ended at 17:30 hrs

Annex 1

AFRICA CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT PROJECT

SUPPORTED BY



NIGERIA



GHANA



BENIN



TOGO



BURKINA
FASO



COTE D'IVOIRE



SENEGAL



GAMBIA



Djibouti



Niger



Guinea



AAU



The World Bank



AFD



ECOWAS

ACE IMPACT SECOND PSC MEETING

Dakar, Senegal

23rd September 2019 (2:00 – 5:30 pm)

PROGRAMME

ACTIVITY	TIME
Welcome address: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PSC Chair, Prof. Amadou Abdoul Sow-to be confirmed, could be Madame Kane (Senegal)• AAU, Prof. Etienne Ehile (Secretary General)• AFD, (TBD)• World Bank, Hamoud Wedoud Kamil, Senior Education Specialist and Senegal Team Leader	14.00 – 14.15

<p><u>Agenda Item 1: Overall ACE Impact Updates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting /Discussion on Key Action Points, Chair • Status of First & Second ACE Impact (effectiveness, implementation readiness including implementation plan support), Dr Sylvia Mkandawire, ACE Impact Project Manager • ACE Impact partnerships (Dr Graham Harrison, Senior S&T Specialist , WB) 	14.30 – 15.30
<p><u>Agenda Item 2: AFD support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status per country on AFD financing, requirements and processes, tbd • AFD support for regional activities. Quentin Delpech 	15.30 – 15.50
<p><u>COFFEE BREAK</u></p>	15:50 – 16:00
<p><u>Agenda Item 3: Update on RFU activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAU Workplan, Dr Sylvia Mkandawire • AAU financial report and budget, Frank (tbc) 	16.00 – 16.40
<p><u>Agenda Item 4: M&E Digitized System</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEL Digitized System for Data Capture (Ms. Nodumo Dhlamini, Director of ICT & Knowledge Management) • 	16.40 – 16.45
<p><u>Agenda Item 5: Tour de la table</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable on key country feedback and actions, PSC members • Brief introduction to the new Advanced Digital Skills Project (a new higher education project), Dr. Ekua Bentil 	16.45 – 17.15
<p><u>Agenda Item 6: Closing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key next steps, First ACE Impact and Second ACE Impact (Himdat Bayusuf and Dr. Ekua Bentil, ACE Impact TTLs) • Closing remarks, Prof. Amadou Sow) 	17.15 – 17.30