

**Minutes**  
**Africa Centers of Excellence**  
**Steering Committee Meeting**  
**October 28, 2013**  
**Dakar, Senegal**

1. The first Steering Committee meeting for the Africa Centers of Excellence project was held at the World Bank office in Dakar, Senegal. The main objective of the meeting was to: (i) officially inaugurate the Steering Committee; (ii) discuss and agree on the Steering Committee's terms of reference and composition; (iii) select the 15 Africa Centers of Excellence to be funded under the project, and (iv) discuss the agenda for regional higher education and science and technology policy and how the project could support this agenda. The list of participants is attached as Annex 1.

2. After the Opening Remarks and the Welcome Remarks, the proposed agenda (Annex 2) was reviewed. The Agenda was approved with the understanding that the discussion for the selection of the Africa Centers of Excellence was the key agenda item of the meeting, and, therefore, the time necessary for discussion of this agenda item should be allocated.

**Agenda Item 1: The Steering Committee**

3. The meeting discussed the mandate, composition and tasks of the Steering Committee. The following changes will be incorporated into the Terms of Reference:

4. Regarding the composition:
- The representation designated by each of the governments that expressed interest in the project will be a maximum of seven, and it will be irrespective of which countries host a funded Africa Centers of Excellence. The project should seek to be regional in impact and not be limited to the countries hosting Centers of Excellence.
  - The Committee chair should be from outside of academia and the government, but with strong experience from academia. This was accepted provided that the Secretary to the Steering Committee, the project coordinator, is from academia.
  - There should be 2 representatives from non-ACE hosting countries in the region on a rotating basis. This should include Lusophone countries interested in participating.
  - The representation of academic experts could be from within the region and outside, but should not be from funded Africa Centers of Excellence. There will be one representative from each of the three disciplines of the project. The role of these members will be to bring global-best practice and knowledge to guide the selected centers of excellence overall and within the three fields.
  - There will be two representatives from the 15 centers of excellence who will represent both the Anglophone and Francophone centers
  - The representative from ECOWAS is ex officio. Hence the representative is appointed by ECOWAS and should be a current ECOWAS official.
  - The ECOWAS member will seek recommendations from the ECOWAS private sector department regarding suitable and potential private sector Steering Committee members.

5. Further, the Steering Committee also discussed the tasks of the steering committee with respect to monitor the performance of the funded Africa Centers of Excellence and provision of advice through the appropriate national channels to the individual Africa Center of Excellence,

including in cases of poor performance. There should also be made provisions for potential capacity building activities for the Steering Committee members to help undertake its tasks. Additionally, the terminology of the documents should refer to West and Central Africa as a region, while Africa-wide activities should be referred to as continental activities. Lastly, a paragraph regarding changes to the composition of the Steering Committee will be incorporated into the ToRs.

6. The ToRs for the Steering Committee will be revised according to the above recommendations. Further, AAU and the World Bank will work to fill the vacant seats on the steering committee before the next steering committee.

## **Agenda Item 2: Evaluation process and Selection**

### **Evaluation process**

7. Following a presentation of the evaluation process (Annex 3), the Steering Committee discussed the evaluation process and made the following observations:

- The Association of African Universities and the World Bank were commended for a well-designed and systematic evaluation.
- The site and leadership evaluation had been organized in a speedy manner, which had led to inconveniences and instances of lack of information to the concerned government and institutions. The Bank team explained that the necessary scheduled for funding approval necessitated this compressed preparation schedule. For future similar exercises, more time should be awarded for planning and communication of site visits and other project activities.
- The evaluation criteria were discussed. It was highlighted that the criteria reflected a certain weightage of the three objectives of the project: regional specialization, academic excellence, and relevance to development. One of the Steering Committee members advised that more communication could have taken place to inform the universities and governments about the weightage of these objectives as reflected in the evaluation criteria.
- The Francophone proposals were on average less represented in the top 15 highest evaluated proposals compared to the Anglophone proposals. This could be partly or fully due to the Anglophone institutions being more used to prepare proposals and compete for funding. One member reflected that the population and student population of the participating Anglophone countries were substantially larger than those of the participating Francophone countries, which is also a factor explaining the evaluation pattern.
- During the meeting, the Steering Committee was given access to all evaluation forms for all the proposals.
- The Steering Committee inquired the AAU and World Bank teams regarding the integrity of the process. These assured that to the fullest extent of their knowledge and efforts the evaluation process had the highest level of integrity and all proposals were evaluated in the same manner strictly following the described procedures and the announced evaluation criteria.
- The Steering Committee validated the integrity of the Evaluation Process.

### **Selection of the Centers of Excellence to be funded under the project**

8. Based upon the selection memo (Annex 4) and a presentation (Annex 5), the Steering Committee deliberated on the four options proposed by the AAU and World Bank with regards to the selection of Africa Centers of Excellence to be funded under the project.

- Some Steering Committee members were of the view that the project aimed for excellence and regional specialization, which were best furthered through selection of the most meritorious proposals and not through equity considerations regarding the distribution of ACEs across the countries.
- Others favored the application of the mandate provided to the Steering Committee to ensure a reasonable equitable distribution of the Africa Centers of Excellence across countries, languages, and country of the participating countries.

9. Following the deliberations, the Steering Committee decided upon Option D: first select the highest evaluated Africa Center of Excellence proposal from each country that submitted proposals, and, second, the highest evaluated Center of Excellence proposals within each discipline up till four proposals are selected from each discipline. Lastly, the remaining three proposals selected are the highest evaluated proposals irrespective of country and discipline. This option was voted for by the Steering Committee members from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Togo, and Senegal. The Nigeria Steering Committee representative abstained from voting. Annex 6 lists the Africa Centers of Excellence proposals that have been selected under the project.

10. **Mining proposal for Francophone Africa.** The Steering Committee considered the suggestion of the World Bank to reserve a grant for an emerging Center of Excellence within mining in Francophone West and Central Africa (see relevant paragraph in Annex 4). One Committee member questioned why the best mining proposal at the regional level should not be selected. The Bank team explained that the severe skill shortage and low training capacity in this part of West and Central Africa was unlikely to be remedied sufficiently in the medium run without a Francophone regional center within this field. However, following the project concept of regional networks, such emerging center of excellence should build upon existing capacity in the region, including capacity in the Anglophone parts. The Steering Committee allowed the proposal to move forward.

11. **Communication of evaluation and selection results.** The Steering Committee instructed the Regional Facilitation Unit to communicate the outcome of the evaluation to each applying institution with a copy to the Focal Point and steering committee member for that country. Further, the World Bank should officially inform the relevant Minister as well as the Ministry of Finance regarding the outcome of the evaluation and selection for that country.

12. **Grievance redressal.** Institutions will through the above communication on the evaluation results be informed about the options to present grievance regarding the evaluation and selection process. At the first level, grievance should be discussed with the national governmental focal point for the project and if not resolved, the institutions will be the option to submit a grievance to a Grievance Committee. AAU would be the secretariat to the Grievance Committee. The Grievance Committee will be constituted of two ACE Steering Committee members. The two members are Prof. Mahama Duweija and Dr. Salifou Ouiminga. Further, an external expert will be the third member to the Grievance Committee to be presented by the

Regional Facilitation Unit (AAU) and agreed by the two appointed Steering Committee members. The Grievance Committee will deliberate on any submitted grievance, taking into account the comments of the Regional Facilitation Unit on the grievance.

**Agenda Item 3: Next Steps**

13. The key next steps under the project were presented (Annex 7). This comprised of project preparation activities to prepare for World Bank Board approval, and proposal improvement of the selected Africa Centers of Excellence.

14. The Steering Committee members and the country focal points will be critical actors for successful achievement of the key next steps, in particular for the country-level meetings on the financing modality and Financing Agreement with respective Ministries of Finance.

**Agenda Item 4: Regional Facilitation Unit and Regional Higher Education and Science and Technology**

15. The Association of African Universities presented on the key next steps that will be undertaken in the next four months to facilitate the project at the regional level (Annex 7).

16. The ECOWAS representative presented on the Science and Technology agenda and it was agreed that the ECOWAS will further detail the support for policy development within regional higher education and Science and Technology (Annex 8).

List of Annexes:

1. List of participants
2. Meeting Agenda
3. Evaluation process presentation
4. Selection memo
5. Presentation on results and options
6. List of Selected Centers of Excellence to be funded by the project pending final World Bank Board approval of the project
7. Key next steps
8. Next steps of AAU
9. ECOWAS presentation on S&T agenda

Annex 1

ACE Steering Committee Participants List-October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013

	Name	Title and Sector	Country/Organisation
1.	Prof. Mahama Duweija	Executive Secretary of National Council for Tertiary Education	Ghana
2.	Dr. Salifou Ouiminga	Directeur Recherche et Coopération Universitaire	Burkina Faso
3.	Prof. Messanvi Gbeassor	Directeur national de la recherche scientifique et technique	Togo
4.	Prof. Jeane Claude T Codija	Enseignant Chercheur, Université d'Abomey-Calavi	Benin
5.	Prof. Aminata Sall Diallo	Conseiller Technique	Senegal
6.	Prof. Ngameni	Representing Prof. Marcel Fouda (ACE SC Member)	Cameroon
7.	Dr. Chiedu Felix Mafiana	Representing NUC Executive Secretary Prof. Okojie	Nigeria
8.	Mr. Roland Kouakou	Principal Programme Officer in charge of Science and Technology	ECOWAS
9.	Dr. Irene Annor-Frempong	Director, Capacity Building (Agriculture science representative)	Forum for Agriculture Research Africa

Non-Steering Committee Members Participants List

1.	Ritva Reinikka	Director Human Development, Africa	World Bank
2.	Andreas Blom	Team Lead	World Bank
3.	Himdat Bayusuf	Education Specialist	World Bank
4.	Atou Seck	Senior Education Specialist	World Bank
5.	Joshua Attah	Director, ICT	Nigeria University Commission
6.	Obiechefu Ukwuagwu		Nigeria University Commission
7.	Jonathan Mba	Director, Research & Academic Planning/ACE Coordinator	AAU
8.	Gabrielle Hansen	Assistant Project Officer	AAU

Annex 2: ACE Steering Committee Agenda

Annex 3: Selection Memo

Annex 4: Attached presentation on evaluation process

Annex 5: Attached presentation of ACE results

Annex 6: Key project next steps

Annex 7: Regional Facilitation Unit (AAU) planned activities

Annex 8: Attached ECOWAS presentation on Science and Technology