

# MINUTES OF THE

## Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE)

### Sixth Steering Committee Meeting

11 May 2015

Kairaba Hotel, Banjul, the Gambia

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Cherno Omar Barry, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, Gambia, Chair

Prof. Aminata Sall Diallo, Technical Advisor on Higher Education, Government of Senegal

Prof. Jean Claude T. Codjia, Rector of the Agricultural University of Kétou, Benin

Dr. Salifou Ouiminga, Director of University Research and Cooperation, Burkina Faso

Prof. Mahama Duwiejua, Executive Secretary, National Council for Tertiary Education, Ghana

Dr. Joshua Atah, Representative of the National Universities Commission, Nigeria

Dr. Jacob Tona, Associate Professor, Poultry Science Laboratory, University of Lomé, Representative of the PSC Member, Togo

Prof. Koffi Mawunyo Agbenoto, Secretary General, Ministry of Higher Education and Research, ACE Focal Point, Togo

#### MEMBERS ABSENT:

Prof. Marcel Fouda, Advisor to the Minister of Education (Yaoundé, Cameroun)

Prof. Julius Okojie, Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigeria

Prof. Messanvi Gbeassor, President of the University of Lomé, Togo

Dr. Irene Annor-Frempong, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Accra, Ghana

Dr. Didier Acouetey, President of AfricSearch, France

Dr. Tewfik Nawar, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sherbrooke, Canada

Dr. Roland Kouakou, Senior Programme Officer responsible for Science and Technology, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja

Mr. Emmanuel Barry, Officer, Département du Développement Humain  
Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA), Ouagadougou,  
Burkina Faso

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr. Andreas Blom, ACE Project Task Team Leader, the World Bank

Miss Himdat Bayusuf, Education Specialist, the World Bank

Dr. Moustapha Lo, Education Specialist, the World Bank, Senegal

Dr. Olatunde Adekola, Senior Education Specialist, the World Bank, Nigeria

Prof. Mamadou Sangharé, Directeur général de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche du Sénégal ;

Prof. Jonathan MBA, Coordinator-ACE, AAU, Accra, Ghana

Mr. Maxwell Amo-Hoyte, Finance Director, AAU, Accra, Ghana

Mrs. Brigitte Norgbey, Project Officer-ACE, AAU, Accra, Ghana

Mrs. Adeline Addy, M&E Officer, AAU, Accra, Ghana

Mr. Abednego Corletey, IT/Procurement Officer, AAU, Ghana

Mrs. Gabrielle Hansen, Assistant Project Officer, AAU, Accra, Ghana

#### **OBSERVER:**

Prof. Aka Fulgence Nindjin, Director of Higher Education and ACE Focal Point for Côte d'Ivoire

1. The Sixth Steering Committee (SC) meeting for the Africa Centers of Excellence (ACE) project was held at the Kairaba Hotel, Banjul on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The main objective of the meeting was to review progress and guide the impact of the project. The particular objectives are:

- (i) update on project progress on project effectiveness for all 19 ACEs;
- (ii) Progress towards achievement of results
- (iii) Operational manual update
- (iv) Update on remaining Regional Facilitation Unit activities and financial report
- (v) update on additional financing for Côte d'Ivoire

- (vi) Discussion on key next steps following PSC meeting
- (vii) Preparations for next Steering Committee Meeting

The agenda and the participants' list are attached.

2. The Chair and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology of the Gambia, welcomed members to the Gambia.

### **Agenda Item 1: Project Progress**

#### ***Brief Update on the ACEs progress on the project effectiveness for all 19 ACEs***

3. AAU made a brief presentation on the progress following the Dakar PSC meeting in March 2015. Six countries have now achieved project effectiveness (Burkina, Benin, Cameroon, Senegal, The Gambia and Togo). To date, 3 countries have received disbursement, namely, Burkina Faso Benin, The Gambia and Senegal. In addition, capacity building workshops in revenue generation took place in Senegal, Benin and Cameroon. Additional financing for Côte d'Ivoire was also reported with details on the announcement of a call for proposal followed by information and preparation workshop in Abidjan on April 22, 2015 to allow potential candidates to get information on the different aspects of the selection process. Monitoring and Evaluation activities revealed the progress made by the ACEs on specific performance indicators. Overall, good progress was made in all the ACEs: all the IPs were finalized, disbursement is also in progress to allow ACEs to start real educational activities.

#### ***Progress towards achievement of results***

4. A brief presentation was made on progress towards the achievement of results. Individual results framework were presented, followed by the aggregated results of the performance indicators. Overall, 5 education related DLIs were presented, namely, regional and national students recruitment, accreditation, internships, revenue generation and international publications. This time around, fiduciary, financial management and procurement DLIs have not been discussed. The aggregated results showed that in some centers progress is being made on

indicators like national and international recruitment, students' internships and faculty exchange. However, accreditation, revenue generation were not that advanced. Specifically, fifteen programs have been accredited and the ACEs have been able to raise some money. Nonetheless, it was added that more study was required to verify how the data was collected in order to confirm accuracy.

5. The challenges reported were mainly delay in the submission of the result framework and non-adherence to instructions. Remedial actions proposed were reminders via email and telephone, sharing of sample RF completed with ACEs that need support. In conclusion, the ACEs were requested to submit the next RF by October 15, 2015. This time around, the DLI would be verified by the experts. This would be required for the disbursement of the DLI2.

6. The Chair then draw participants' attention to the arrival of the Focal Point of Côte d'Ivoire, Prof. Aka Fulgence Nindjin, who was invited as an observer, as Côte d'Ivoire has not been fully integrated into the ACEs yet. The chair then gave the opportunity to participants to react to the presentations that were made earlier.

7. Questions were asked about accreditation and the expectation of the project regarding national, regional and international accreditations as well as publications in peer reviewed journals. Members were in agreement that international accreditation was a long process and requested that the ACEs be given enough time to be able to first identify the potential accreditation agencies and to start the accreditation procedures. A number of members reported on some initiatives that were being taken in their respective countries related to accreditation.

8. Senegal expressed concerns about the decision by the project not to provide National Review Committee meeting attendance allowance and suggested that a workable solution be found to the issue that was raised by a number of members, a number of times. Once again, it was clarified that the only refundable expenses are the expenses related to transportation of members attending meeting from outside the city and also costs related to logistics. Reference was once again made to the Operational Manual for more details on the issue. The Chair gave the example of the

Gambia about how the National Review Committee meetings costs are being paid from government local contribution and not the World Bank funds.

9. Discussion were also made about revenue generation. Given the fact that external revenue generation seems to be one of the DLIs that was not performing well. Members enquired about actions that are being taken to address the issue and remedy the problem at this early stage of the project so that the indicator in question does not lag behind. Reference was made regarding the engagement of the revenue generation experts to work with the selected ACEs to reinforce their capacity in revenue generation. It was further reported that the revenue generation workshops that started with the Francophone ACEs would soon be extended to the Anglophone ACEs as well.

10. A short presentation on the updated sections of the Operational Manual was made. The main update were related to funds disbursement, monitoring and evaluation as well as detailed information on required forms to be used for reporting. Discussions were made regarding a few emerging issues that prompted the inclusion of a clause in the Operational Manual regarding the replacement of center leaders.

### ***Update on the Remaining RFU Activities and Financial Report***

11. The Chair gave the floor to the AAU's Director of Finance to make a brief presentation on the remaining RFU activities and the financial report that was followed by a few questions for clarification.

### **Agenda Item 2: Update on Additional Financing for Côte d'Ivoire**

12. The Focal Point of Côte d'Ivoire was asked to update members on progress made by Côte d'Ivoire regarding the preparation and submission of proposals since the Abidjan workshop. The Focal Point assured members that Côte d'Ivoire was on the right track regarding response to the call for proposals. He further added that to date 5 institutions are currently preparing proposals for submission to the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research by June 5<sup>th</sup> that was the due date set up by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Proposals would then be reviewed by the National

Selection Committee that would screen the proposal before submission to AAU by June 12, 2015.

13. This was followed by a brief presentation on the Côte d'Ivoire Workshop and the next steps in the selection process; which included the proposal review at the country level before submission to AAU. Proposals will then be evaluated by the group of scientific experts, some of who took part in the review of the first selection, to complete the desk review first before proceeding with site visits. Members' concerns about keeping the same standards of selection have been addressed by the WB by reiterating the fact that the proposals submitted by Côte d'Ivoire would not be selected if they did not get the minimum score (62.8%) that was applied in the first selection. There were also concerns about the fact that new fields of study were chosen for the Côte d'Ivoire in addition to STEM. Again, reference was made regarding regionality and the need to address the development challenges in the region with the ACE project. He further added that Côte d'Ivoire already has capacity in the fields selected (statistics and accounting) and since there was a need for experts in those fields in the sub-region, it was necessary that new topics be introduced to avoid duplication of study programs.

14. Questions were again raised about the project's end date as Ghana and Nigeria were lagging behind due to the parliamentary approval issue that has just been resolved, almost a year into the project. The WB reiterated the fact that the project start date was the project signing date. Therefore, recommendations were made that members continued working with hopes of catching up with time lost and that it was premature now in the life of the project to start talking about extension. In fact, the WB further added that the project was approved by the Board on April 15, 2014 which was the official start date of the project. It was mentioned that after two years or three years into the project, an assessment on the need for an extension would be made and appropriate measures would be taken. The SC members were also reminded that the ACE Project, just like other projects, must have a start date and end date. Importantly, the WB policy on extension is that a strong justification has to be provided for that and that the project cannot be extended for more than one year.

### **Agenda Item 3: Discussion on next steps**

15. Revenue generation capacity building for the remaining ACEs, July to September 2015

Review and selection of firms for DLI verification consultancy, May to July 2015

Review and selection of a firm for bibliometric services, May to June 2015

Support National Review Committees, May to December 2015

Periodic WebEx discussions with the ACEs, June to December 2015

Organization of the Seventh PSC Meeting in Cotonou, November 2015

Preparation of the Fourth ACE Workshop, November 2015

Getting the project fully started, disbursement to Togo, Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana, June 15, 2015

16. Leading to the closing remarks, the Chair asked Benin to give a brief report on preparations for the next PSC Meeting schedule for November 16, 2015 in Cotonou. A short presentation was made about accommodation and other relevant information regarding preparation towards the Seventh PSC Meeting and Fourth ACE Workshop in Cotonou.

17. The Chair thanked Benin and then called on members to give a brief statement on key priorities that they would be focusing on within the next six months.

- ❖ **Senegal:** Accreditation issue will be tackled by the 2 Senegalese ACEs with the support from the Government.
- ❖ **Ghana:** Inform center leaders about the status of the project and work together with the ACEs on Industrial linkages.
- ❖ **Togo:** will focus on the official launch of the project and effective implementation on the ground concerning Masters and Doctorate students training and capacity building.
- ❖ **Côte d'Ivoire:** Came to the meeting to learn from current members and liaise with 2iE and engage the institutions and provide needed support for the development and submission of sound and strong proposals for selection so that Côte d'Ivoire could become a full member of the ACE family.

- ❖ **Nigeria:** will be effective in a matter of days. Regular meetings will be scheduled weekly or bi-weekly for information sharing. NUC promised a lot of results, but expected a lot of capacity building from the WB/AAU team on fiduciary and monitoring and evaluation issues.
- ❖ **Burkina Faso:** reassured members that he would work in collaboration with the ACE as the official launch of the project is coming soon and preparations are underway. Member added that 2iE would work on reporting issues in order to be up-to-date with the submission of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the results framework. He also promised to focus on gender issues and added that a Government department has been created to promote the recruitment and training of girls and women in science and technology.
- ❖ **Benin:** National Review Committee meeting is scheduled within 4 to 5 days and at that time the project activities will be evaluated and lessons would be drawn from the proceeds. There will also be a focus on effective communication between various departments and work is underway to recruit regional students.
- ❖ **The Gambia:** ready to send students to the ACEs. Will continue to promote the ACE project to recruit more students and encourage a large number of students to benefit from the ACE project.

18. Members tentatively agreed to hold the next meeting after the upcoming November one in Ghana and Burkina Faso respectively to conclude the rotation.

19. Closing remarks were made by the World Bank and the Chair officially declared the meeting closed at 1:35 pm.

20. WB/AAU team wish to extend a heartfelt gratitude to the host country, the Chair and his team for all the preparation and hard work to make the Sixth PSC meeting in Banjul a success and for hosting dinner for the meeting participants later in the evening.

## **Annexes**

1. Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> ACE Steering Committee Meeting
2. Sixth Steering Committee Agenda
3. Update on the ACEs report
4. Update on the ACEs PowerPoint Presentation
5. Progress towards achievement PowerPoint Presentation
6. Operational Manual PowerPoint Presentation
7. Financial Report
8. Update on Outcome of Abidjan Workshop
9. Key Next Steps following Sixth PSC Meeting