Africa Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact)  
West and Central Africa  

Call for Proposals Guidance  

Deadline for governmental submission to the AAU:  
September 28, 2018 18:00 (Ghana time)  

I. General Information  

A. Participating Countries  

B. Project Objective and Expected Results  
The Project Development Objective is to improve the quality, quantity and development impact of postgraduate education (defined to include Master’s and PhD degrees, and short-term professional level courses and training) in selected universities through regional specialization and collaboration.  
The expected results of the proposed project include:  
- Increase in the number of students, in particularly regional and female, enrolled and graduating from Master’s and PhD programs  
- Improvement in the quality of programs including an increase in the number of programs – and ACE host institutions – that obtain international accreditation  
- Development impact attributable to the project, including improvement in the relevance of the education/training programs and of the applied research evident through:  
  - Increase in the number, and strength, of sectoral partnerships that lead to production and hiring of high-performing graduates, internships for students, application and commercialization of research results, advisory board participation, etc.  
  - Increase in the amount of externally generated revenue, including from companies and other sectoral partners  

C. Project Description  
The Africa Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) project will provide support to two types of centers (a) ACEs and (b) Emerging centers. The final number of centers to be supported under each type and specific funding allocation per center will depend on the total funding envelope of each country and their priorities. The project anticipates:  
(a) the selection and support of approximately 40 centers of excellence (ACE centers) that each address a specific development challenge through an integrated program of activities, focused on postgraduate education, applied collaborative research, and outreach to partners.  
  - The selected centers are expected to become regional assets, and to participate in regional networks that strengthen the capacity and the impact of the higher
education sector in West and Central Africa.

- Around 5 colleges/schools of engineering and technology hosting an ACE will be selected to receive support strengthening their engineering and technology programs college/school-wide.

(b) the non-competitive selection and support of up to 8 emerging centers (non-ACEs) to strengthen their undergraduate and post-graduate education programs to provide training to their students and develop in them the skills which will be useful in addressing national development needs of the country hosting the center. The emerging centers will invest around 40 percent of the funding in regional collaboration, including in regional scholarship and regional technical assistance for its self-improvements. The eligible countries are participating countries that have not hosted Africa Centers of Excellence in phase I, notably Djibouti, Guinea, Niger, and The Gambia.

Each ACE Impact center is expected to identify an aspect of a development challenge that can be addressed with an integrated program of work that is achievable over 4 ½ years project duration.

The ACE Impact project consists of three components:

- Component 1: Establishing new and scaling-up well-performing existing ACEs for development impact
- Component 2: Fostering regional partnerships for emerging centers and regional scholarships
- Component 3: Enhancing regional project facilitation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

This Call for Proposals is focused on Component 1. The Call for Proposals for Component 2 will be released in October 2018.

**Component 1 aims to build and strengthen the capacity of competitively selected ACE centers based in higher education institutions across West and Central Africa.** Each ACE center should address a regional development challenge through: higher quality postgraduate education addressing the skills gap and tackling priority applied research questions; leading regional education networks; and delivering short-term courses. For example, a two-week course for mid-career professionals. In consultation with stakeholders, the centers will update and/or launch new postgraduate (master’s and Ph.D.) degree programs that are accredited to meet international high-quality standards. The centers will offer curricula that ensure that their students have the demanded competences upon graduating from their degree programs, including analytical, digital, and entrepreneurial competencies.

Partnerships with national, regional, and global sectoral stakeholders (private enterprise, including, but not limited to, multinational, regional, national or local Enterprises; Ministries and other public authorities; chambers of commerce; trade groups and professional associations; hospitals; policymakers; and other appropriate stakeholders) and academic institutions will ensure that the ACEs focus their activities on the education and research needs to solve specific problems associated with the targeted development challenge. Centers will disseminate their research findings to policymakers and companies, as well as through international peer reviewed journals.

Further, each center will be required to have policies backed by specific interventions in place to:

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Full instructions and further details available at https://ace.aau.org/call-for-proposals-guidance/
(a) increase the number of females within their student body, faculty and academic leadership; and (b) ensure the overall well-being of their student population. Under this project, greater emphasis will be placed on ensuring ACE host institutions are incentivized to undertake several activities, including those which promote: good governance; data collection and management; and regionalization of their institutions, that is, taking steps to make their institutions regionally (and ultimately globally) competitive.

Component 1 centers will be selected competitively using a merit-based, independent, transparent evaluation and selection process based upon international standards. Component 1 has two Sub-components. Sub-component 1.1 will provide support to newly established centers of excellence. Sub-component 1.2 will provide additional support to existing centers with a record of excellence in the ACE I Project. Sub-components 1.1 and 1.2 centers will have two competition windows through which they can apply: (i) pre-identified regional development challenges and (ii) open competition.

(i) **Pre-identified Regional Development Challenges**: 10 Pre-identified Regional Development Challenges have been identified. Centers interested in these topical areas may, as part of their proposal, respond to the specific Terms of Reference (ToR) that are provided in this Call for Proposals. At least one Center will be competitively selected for support in each pre-identified topical area.

Center proposals responding to a ToR should ensure that the proposal lays out a cohesive program of work that builds upon the strengths of the center and does not simply mimic the language contained in the ToR. In addition, the proposal must maintain a balance between the scope of the ToR and what can be achieved with the ACE Impact budget and project timeframe. Proposals may not fully respond to every element in the Terms of Reference, but should describe a program of work that builds a sustainable center that addresses the thematic areas together with the kind of partners described in the ToR.

The Pre-identified Regional Development Challenges are:

- Coastal Degradation
- Digital Development
- Education Training and Leadership
- Nursing
- Power
- Public Procurement
- Public Policy and Quantitative Skills
- Social Risk Management
- Transport
- Urban Design

(ii) **Open competition**: All other proposals that do not respond to the ToR associated with a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge will compete for selection (and funding) in the open competition element of the project. Centers that are focused on Engineering and Technology, Agriculture, and Human Resources for Health challenges are particularly encouraged. It is expected that approximately 10-15 ACE centers will be selected in this open competition window.
Additional support to the best engineering and technology ACE-hosting institutions. Institutions that are selected to host an engineering and/or technology-focused ACE Impact center (either a new center under Sub-component 1.1 or an existing ACE I center selected under Sub-component 1.2) with capacity in other engineering and technology disciplines will have the opportunity to receive additional funding of approximately up to US$8 million. This funding would support an institution-wide strengthening of the engineering and technology programs within their College or School of Engineering.¹ Potential interventions to be coupled with the center activities will focus on increasing institutional impact, including: the scaling-up of student enrolment (including undergraduates); achieving international quality standards; introducing new academic programs; promoting project-based learning and innovative pedagogy; establishing new laboratories; enabling technology transfer and business/entrepreneurship; building linkages to business programs; enhancing teaching and research capacity; and promoting institutional transformation in terms of policies and operations. No additional proposal is required from the center or the College of Engineering, however, an expression of interest should be submitted by the Dean of the College of Engineering, along with the Component 1 ACE center proposal. Up to five engineering and technology institutions will be selected based upon the recommendations of independent expert evaluators, government evaluation of institutional capacity and available country funding.

D. Anticipated Funding Amount:

- For Component 1 ACE Impact Centers: Approximately US$ 4 - 6 million per Center over four and half years

- The following Table indicates the available World Bank IDA financing, with an indication of potential external co-financing, that are available to support the ACE Impact project in each participating country. In addition, the maximum number of proposals to be submitted for evaluation (based upon available IDA credit) for each country is provided.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Maximum IDA credits available</th>
<th>Potential external financier available</th>
<th>Maximum number of proposals</th>
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¹ The term College/School of Engineering is used generically here, and may refer to a Faculty, a Polytechnic within a university, or other similar organizational structure.

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Full instructions and further details available at https://ace.aau.org/call-for-proposals-guidance/
E. Proposal Submission Guidelines

- Proposals may only be submitted by higher education institutions in countries participating in the ACE Impact project (see sub-section I.A. above for list of countries).
- Proposals for Component 1 Centers may only be submitted by institutions currently offering postgraduate (masters and PhD) degrees (or equivalent).
- Proposals must be submitted through the Ministry or Agency in the country responsible for higher education. The responsible Ministry or Agency will then submit their selected proposals to the ACE Impact Regional Facilitation Unit hosted by the Association of African Universities (AAU) prior to the deadline.
- Participating countries may impose additional criteria on institutions intending to submit proposals. Institutions should consult with the national project websites and/or National Focal Points (see Section VI of this guidance) for further information.
- Each participating country can submit a maximum number of proposals based upon the government’s commitment to fund the proposals if selected through IDA financing (see Table in subsection I.D. above). The cognizant Ministry or Agency in a participating country is responsible for any preselection process and decision to achieve this limit.
- Only current ACE I Centers may submit Proposals under sub-component 1.2.
- A higher education institution may submit a maximum of three proposals for subcomponent 1.1 centers. Additional proposals from an institution will only be accepted for sub-component 1.2 (renewal of an existing ACE I Center).
- Proposals led by female academic faculty are particularly encouraged.
- Proposals submitted by faculty members affiliated with colleges of engineering and technology are encouraged. It is anticipated that at least 50% of selected ACE Impact Centers will be in these areas.
- Proposals submitted by faculty affiliated with medical schools are encouraged to address shortages in human resources for health.
- Proposals submitted by faculty members affiliated with agriculture universities are encouraged. However, sub-component 1.1 proposals focused on agriculture may not be submitted from universities in Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana or Cameroon. Institutions seeking support for agriculture-focused projects in these countries should instead submit their proposal under the Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHAEA) project.

F. Due Dates

- NOTE: The Deadline provided below is for Submission to the AAU by the responsible national agency or Ministry. Participating Countries may have an earlier deadline or additional requirements. See Section VI of this guidance for further details.

- Full Proposals for Component 1 ACE Impact Centers Due on September 28, 2018 at 18:00 (Ghana-time).

II. Proposal Preparation Instructions

A. Proposal Formatting
• All proposals should use the .docx Proposal Template Document as the basis for the proposal. The section guidance (in light grey) should be deleted prior to proposal submission.
• Proposals may be submitted either in English or in French.
• Proposals should include a Table of Contents.
• All sections of the proposal must be completed prior to submission. The list of required sections – and the guidance for the content within each section – is provided in Section III below of this Call for Proposals.
• The page limit for each section must not be exceeded.
• All pages of the proposal should have a page number.
• Proposals should be submitted in 11 point, Calibri font.
• Tables should be completed in the format and length indicated in the Proposal Template Document (.docx) provided for each Sub-Component.
• Proposal sections should not include URLs for additional information. Information or documentation beyond that included in the written proposal will not be used in the evaluation process.
• Proposals should follow accepted academic practice in citing references throughout the proposal. References should be numbered sequentially, and listed separately as a required attachment to the proposal. References should be reported in a standard form, and include: the names of all authors; the article and journal title; book title; volume and page numbers; and year of publication. If available, a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) may be provided.

Proposal Guidance
• All proposals should clearly identify the Development Challenge that is addressed through the education and research activities of the proposed Center.
• Prior to submitting a proposal, the faculty team should meet with approximately 40 potential sectoral partners (private multinational; regional, national or local enterprises, relevant Ministries and other public authorities, chambers of commerce, trade groups, professional associations, hospitals, policymakers and other appropriate stakeholders) to identify: (1) the perceived skills gap and postgraduate programs that the proposed Center should address; and (2) the applied research needs. A written summary of each meeting should be maintained (but not submitted as part of the written proposal).
• Proposals must include: a tentative list of members for the Sectoral Advisory Board of the center; a list of confirmed sectoral partners if the proposed Center is funded through the ACE Impact Program; and the anticipated contribution, including any financial support, from each confirmed partner.
• Proposals submitted for an ACE Impact Component 1 center (either Sub-Component 1.1 or Sub-Component 1.2) will be evaluated and selected using a competitive, independent, transparent merit-based process based upon international standards. The evaluation process and criteria are described in Section IV of this Call for Proposals.

Proposals Submitted Under Component 1
• Component 1 has two Sub-Components:
  • Sub-component 1.1 will provide support to new centers of excellence
  • Sub-component 1.2 will provide additional support to existing centers with a record of excellence in the ACE I Project

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• All proposals submitted under Component 1 (either 1.1 or 1.2) must clearly identify a Development Challenge that will be addressed through the center activities.
• While all proposals must address a Development Challenge, the ACE Impact Project has identified 10 Pre-identified Regional Development Challenges in which at least a Component 1 center (either new or renewal) will be selected.
• Component 1 proposals may be submitted in response to a particular Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge, or may be submitted to the open competition element of the Call for Proposals.
• Additional funding to strengthen Colleges of Engineering and/or Technology that host an engineering focused ACE Impact Center may be available. Separate proposals are NOT required. An Expression of Interest should be submitted as part of a Sub-component 1.1 or Sub-component 1.2 center proposal.

• Proposals Submitted in Response to a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge
  ▪ Within the project scope, 10 Pre-identified Regional Development Challenges have been identified under Component 1. For each of these areas, specific Terms of Reference (ToRs) have been developed. The best proposal (that meets a minimum threshold) that responds to the ToRs in each Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge will be supported through the ACE Impact project.
  ▪ Proposals should clearly indicate if they are responding to the ToRs in one of the Pre-identified Regional Development Challenges.
  ▪ Proposals that respond to the Terms of Reference in a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge should respond to the topical ToRs in the appropriate sections of the proposal. There are no additional pages or sections required (or permitted) to address the ToRs.
  ▪ All proposals have the option of responding to a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge. Proposals that are related to the Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge, but do not satisfactorily respond to the ToRs, will be reviewed in the open competition Evaluation and Selection process.
  ▪ Proposals that respond to a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge should lay out a cohesive program of work that builds upon the strengths of the institution and does not simply mimic the language contained in the Terms of Reference.
  ▪ Proposals may not fully respond to every element in the Terms of Reference, but should describe a program of work that builds a sustainable center that addresses the thematic areas described in the ToR.
  ▪ The proposal must maintain a balance between the scope of the ToR and what can be reasonably achieved with the ACE Impact budget and project timeframe.

• Proposals Submitted under Sub-Component 1.2
  ▪ Centers supported under the ACE 1 project may submit a renewal proposal under Sub-Component 1.2.
  ▪ Centers supported under Sub-Component 1.2 will receive additional funding beyond that agreed to under the ACE 1 project. This additional financing is subject to the terms of the ACE Impact project.
  ▪ Centers selected for support under Sub-Component 1.2 are expected to use additional funding through ACE Impact to go beyond the accomplishments from ACE 1, and to strengthen development impact and regionalization.

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Full instructions and further details available at https://ace.aau.org/call-for-proposals-guidance/
• All renewal proposals submitted under Sub-Component 1.2 should report on and discuss the results – education and research – achieved in the ACE 1 project.
• All ACE 1 centers must complete Section IIIa (Results from ACE 1 Support) as described in the Proposal Template Document.
• As appropriate, in other sections of the proposal, comment on results obtained and how prior results will be leveraged in ACE Impact.
• In addition to the proposal, evaluators for Component 1.2 proposals will be provided the Annual Reports, Expert Reviews, and Fund Utilization data from the ACE 1 project.
• In general, ACE 1 Centers applying for renewal should not request major infrastructure.
• Sub-Component 1.2 Centers are expected to have in place detailed plans for enhanced regional activities. These renewal centers are expected to take a leading role as a regional hub to focus on a particular Development Challenge, and the proposal should address this expectation.

III. Required Proposal Sections

The required proposal sections for Sub-component 1.1, Sub-component 1.2 and C Sub-component 2.1 proposals are described below. Each proposal should address the identified topics for each section. Do not exceed the maximum page limit for each section.

IIIa. Proposals Submitted under Component 1
All proposals responding to the ACE Impact Call for Proposals under either Sub-component 1.1 or Sub-component 1.2 should complete each section of the proposal as described in the attached link to the Proposal Template Document. The section guidance (in light grey) should be deleted prior to proposal submission.

• Required Sections for ACE Impact Component 1 Proposals

IIIb. Additional Information required for Sub-component 1.2
Current ACE 1 Centers are encouraged to submit renewal proposals under Sub-component 1.2 of the ACE Impact project.

• Proposals submitted under Sub-component 1.2 should complete all sections of the proposal as indicated above in Section IIIa.
• In the appropriate sections of the ACE Impact proposal, comment on the activities undertaken using ACE 1 support to justify the request for additional funding under ACE Impact.
• Sub-component 1.2 ACE Impact centers should not simply be an extension of the activities supported under the ACE 1 project. Proposals should put forth a detailed plan to expand on results from ACE 1, and to enhance regionalization and development impact.
• In addition to all sections of the proposal required under Component 1, proposals submitted under Sub-component 1.2 should complete Section IIIa (Results from ACE 1 Support) in the Proposal Template Document.

• Additional Section required for Sub-component 1.2

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IIIc. Additional Information required for Proposals responding to the Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge Terms of Reference

- Proposals that respond to Terms of Reference (ToRs) in a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge must address the ToRs in the appropriate section of the proposal as described above. There are no additional pages required for these proposals.
- Terms of Reference for each Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge may be found in Section VII of this document.

- The Pre-identified Regional Development Challenges are:
  - Coastal Degradation
  - Digital Development
  - Education Training and Leadership
  - Nursing
  - Power
  - Public Procurement
  - Public Policy and Quantitative Skills
  - Social Risk Management
  - Transport
  - Urban Design

IV. Evaluation and Selection Process

The selection of ACE Impact centers will be made through an open, rigorous, transparent, competitive and merit-based process consistent with international standards for funding education and research centers. All proposals submitted in response to this Call for Proposals will be evaluated by independent experts.

The Evaluation process consists of two sequential steps: Desk Evaluation of the written proposal; and On-site Visit to a short-list of proposed centers.

For the Desk Evaluation, experts - including English and French speakers, academic leaders, African and international subject matter experts – will evaluate all of the written proposals.

Evaluators for Component 1.2 proposals (for renewals of existing ACE 1 centers) will also be provided the progress report, expert reviews, fiduciary reporting, and fund utilization and disbursement data from the ACE 1 project.

The expert evaluators will assess each proposal according to a scoring rubric, and will provide written comments on the proposal.

The scoring rubrics for Desk Evaluations are:

- Scoring rubric for Desk Evaluation of Component 1.1 proposal
- Scoring rubric for Desk Evaluation of Component 1.2 proposal
For proposals submitted in response to Terms of Reference for a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge, there is an additional scoring criteria:

- Additional scoring criteria for proposals responding to Terms of Reference for a Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge

Following the Desk Evaluation of proposals, an expert panel will identify the top ranked proposals (approximately half of those submitted proposals) for an On-site Evaluation. This short-list will be reasonably balanced – across Development Challenges, language groups and countries – and include a mix of new center proposals and renewal proposals as well as those which include women as proposed Center Directors. At least one (the best Desk evaluation) proposal in each Pre-identified Regional Development Challenge will be selected for an On-site visit.

A team - composed of subject matter experts and experts with extensive experience in university leadership – will undertake an On-site evaluation of each short-listed Component 1 proposal (and later, all Component 2 proposals). Each visit will be scheduled for at least a day, and include meetings with university leadership, the leadership of the proposed center, and the sectoral partners who committed to the project. The purpose of the On-site visit is to assess the capacity and commitment – at the project and institutional levels - to implement the project as described in the written proposal. The On-site evaluation team will assess each proposal according to a scoring rubric, and may offer additional written comments on the proposal.

The scoring rubrics for On-site Evaluations are:

- Scoring rubric for On-site Evaluation of Component 1.1 proposal
- Scoring rubric for On-site Evaluation of Component 1.2 proposal

Those Colleges of Engineering that have submitted an Expression of Interest for additional financing will be evaluated in conjunction with the On-site Evaluation. At least one week prior to the On-Site Evaluation, the College will be required to submit a College of Engineering Information Packet. An additional half-day will be scheduled for the College evaluation, and include meetings with College leadership and key stakeholders tasked with strengthening the College with the proposed additional financing. The purpose of the On-site visit to the Colleges of Engineering is to assess the proposed interventions and the capacity to implement them in the project timeframe. The On-site evaluation team will assess each College, and the proposed interventions, according to a scoring rubric, and may offer additional written comments.

- College of Engineering Information Packet (due one week prior to On-Site Evaluation)
- Scoring rubric for On-site Evaluation of College of Engineering

Following the completion of the On-site Evaluations for Component 1 proposals, an independent Expert Panel will be convened to consider all the On-site evaluations, and to formulate recommendations for the Project Steering Committee on the proposals that should be selected for support under Component 1. The Expert Panel will be composed of leading international experts with knowledge of research and higher education in Africa, and with experience in managing large projects or institutions.

The selection of the ACE Impact Component 1 Centers will be made at a Ministerial level Project ACE Impact Call for Proposals Guidance
Full instructions and further details available at https://ace.aau.org/call-for-proposals-guidance/
Steering Committee (PSC) meeting. The PSC will consider the recommendations of the Expert Panel and the project funding that is available. Using well-defined, objective and transparent criteria, the PSC will make the final selection of the ACE Impact Sub-Component 1.1 and Sub-Component 1.2 centers, as well as the additional financing for Colleges of Engineering.

At the conclusion of the Selection process, the evaluations of each proposal submitted will be shared with the proposing institution. Both the scoring rubric(s) and the written comments will be made available. For the Desk Evaluations, the identities of the evaluators will be redacted.

Grievance procedure: In exceptional circumstances, institutions submitting an ACE Impact Component 1 proposal that was not selected for funding may submit a written Notice of Grievance to the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU). A Notice of Grievance is permitted only when the institution believes that the proposal was not evaluated fairly or in a reasonable manner.

All selections and funding decision remain subject to the approval of the World Bank (IDA) Board of Directors, other external financiers for their financing part and national authorities.

V. Negotiation and Implementation

The final budget for each center will be negotiated following the evaluation and selection process. The budget will depend upon: the type of center (renewal or new); the discipline of the center; the proposed education and research activities; the anticipated number of new students; the costs associated with the proposed workplan; the resources required; and the capacity of the center to achieve the results. The negotiation on anticipated results will occur concurrently with the budget negotiation.

Prior to the formal signing of contracts and launch of the centers, several critical elements must be completed: (1) a revision and strengthening of the proposal in response to the comments and feedback provided in the evaluation process; (2) a fiduciary assessment and procurement plan; and (3) an environmental and social safeguards screening and management plan. In addition, a revised workplan for the life of the center, and a detailed implementation plan for Year 1, must be prepared and approved.

VI. National Focal Points and Project Websites

The Association of African Universities (AAU) will serve as the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) for the ACE Impact project. Updated project information will be available at the project website provided below.

Regional Facilitation Unit: Association of African Universities (AAU)
https://aceimpact.aau.org (TBC)

National Focal Points are designated to provide country specific information regarding the ACE Impact project. A list of these National Focal Points, as well as country specific ACE Impact project websites, is provided below.

Countries participating in the ACE Impact project may have additional requirements beyond those described in this Call for Proposals. All institutions that intend to submit a proposal are

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Full instructions and further details available at https://ace.aau.org/call-for-proposals-guidance/
encouraged to consult with the national project website and/or the national focal point for ACE Impact as listed below.

All proposals must be submitted through the cognizant Ministry or Agency in the country that is home to the higher education institution. Details on the national submission process – including any national deadlines that may exist prior to the project proposal submission due dates - are determined by each participating country, and are described on the country specific project websites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Email and National Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>Republic of Benin</td>
<td>Mrs. Benedicta Rose Houetchenou</td>
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<td>Mr. Rasmame Kabore</td>
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