

AFRICA CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE (ACE) PROJECT

MINUTES OF THE AFRICA CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE (ACE I) FIFTEENTH PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

23 September 2019
World Bank Office, Dakar, Senegal

MEMBERS PRESENT

1. Prof. Coumba Touré Kane (Chair, Senegal)
2. Mrs. Bénédicte Houetchenou (Benin)
3. Prof. Ramané Kaboré (Burkina Faso)
4. Dr. Henry Nkoto (Cameroon)
5. Mr. Yaya Sireh Jallow (Gambia)
6. Prof. Mohammed Salifu (Ghana)
7. Dr. Joshua Atah (Nigeria)
8. Prof. Kwami Kokou¹ (Togo)
9. Dr. Emmanuel Barry (JEMOA)
10. Dr. Didier Acouetey (Private Sector)

MEMBERS ABSENT

With Apologies

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

Without Apologies

3. Dr. Irene Annor-Frempong (Agric. Expert)

IN ATTENDANCE

World Bank, AAU & Others

1. Ms. Himdat Bayusuf (ACE I Task Team Leader, Education Specialist, World Bank)
2. Dr. Ekuia Bentil (ACE Impact Task Team Leader, World Bank)
3. Dr. Graham Harrison (Senior Science & Technology Specialist, World Bank)

¹ Representing Prof. Gbeassor (Togo)

4. Dr. Moustapha Lo (Education Specialist, World Bank, Senegal)
5. Mrs. Eunice Ackwerh (Senior Education Specialist, World Bank, Ghana)
6. Ms. M’Bahly Maud-Andree Kouadio IV (Consultant, World Bank, Washington)
7. Ms. Rim Wazni (Consultant, World Bank, Senegal)
8. Ms. Véronique Sauvat (Head Education Department, Agence Français de Développement)
9. Dr. Quentin Delpech (Task Team Leader & Lead Expert Higher Education, Agence Français 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. Yvette Quashie (Logistics Officer, AAU)
18. Millicent Afriyie Kyei (ACE Communication Officer, AAU)
19. Prof. Habibou Abarchi (ACE Impact PSC Member, Niger)
20. Prof. Mamadou Saliou Diallo (ACE Impact PSC Member, Guinea)

INTRODUCTION

1. The ACE I Project Steering Committee (PSC) held its fifteenth meeting on September 23, 2019 at the offices of the World Bank in Dakar, Senegal. The meeting reviewed the project's performance focusing particularly on the project's progress; activities of the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU); project closing guidelines; country reviews; and next steps. The detailed agenda is provided in Annex 1. Ten (10) out of the 15 members of the PSC were present.

OPENING

2. Prof. Coumba Touré Kane (Senegal) chaired the meeting. In opening remarks, she noted that Senegal was honoured to host the PSC meeting and the project's regional workshop. Prof. Kane recalled that the project was launched in Senegal in 2014 and the current meeting was to assess its achievements over the five-year period and discuss sustaining the initiative as the World Bank sponsorship ends in March 2020. Prof. Etienne Ehilé (Secretary General, Association of African Universities) in his turn thanked all members present and reiterated that the present meeting was to take stock of achievements and lessons learned over the years. This he observed, would inform the way forward under the ACE Impact Project. Prof. Ehilé noted the absence of Mr. Andreas Blom (former TTL, ACE Project) following his promotion to manager position. He recognised Mr. Blom's immense contribution to the success of the project and was confident of good future working relations with the new Team led by Mrs. Himdat Bayusuf and Dr. Ekuia Bentil. Dr. Moustapha Lo (Education Specialist, World Bank, Senegal) welcomed the Committee to Dakar and relayed the Bank's appreciation for its leadership and major achievements since the start of the project. He called on the PSC to oversee a successful implementation and closing of the ACE I project and thanked the Government of Senegal for the warm welcome and other courtesies.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

3. The Agenda for the meeting was approved as presented.

REVIEW OF MINUTES OF 14TH PSC MEETING

4. The minutes of the 14th PSC meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved as a true record of the deliberations of the 14th PSC Meeting held in Djibouti City, Djibouti.

MATTERS ARISING

5. Issues arising from the minutes of 14th PSC meeting included: indicating whether PSC attendance constitutes a quorum or not; distinguishing between members absent with and without apologies; formalizing the process of approval of accreditation agencies and sharing the list of accreditation agencies; the AAU undertaking a study on University-Industry linkages; and including the tracer study report in the dossier for the next PSC meeting. Action had been taken on all but one of the issues. The university-industry

linkages study is scheduled for November 2019 but terms of reference have been developed. The PSC requested that the proposed study should look up success stories and let the lessons learned inform implementation under the ACE Impact project.

PROJECT PROGRESS

Project Status and Results

6. The report on the project's status and results showed a positive outlook on performance and disbursements. Four (4) out of the five project development objectives and all intermediary results having been fully achieved. Internships which is yet to be fully achieved is now at 93% completion rate; extra rounds of verification and fast-tracking of verification over the reporting period resulted in 16 ACEs achieving over 80% completion rate of their total grants; and 20 out 22 ACEs together have 57 internationally accredited programmes. A pilot tracer study of the project showed good results and provided useful data on satisfaction with the project, relevance of the teaching and learning, and employability of the ACE project graduates.
7. Various indicator results were verified and earnings paid out to deserving centres. The preliminary report for another round of verification of student results in August/September 2019 had been shared with ACEs and would be finalised after the Dakar workshop. Total disbursements per ACE are expected to improve accordingly.
8. The PSC requested that the full report of the Pilot Tracer Study be shared for its information.

Decision/Resolution:

- **AAU to share the full report on the Pilot Tracer Study with the PSC.**
- **AAU study on university-industry linkages to feature success stories and apply lessons to ACE Impact project.**

Disbursements and Fund Utilisation

9. Total disbursements have improved considerably since the last reporting in Djibouti going up by 10% to a new high of 83%. La Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Togo recorded significant increases of 16%, 12% and 9% respectively. Project wise disbursements are expected to experience a further improvement following disbursements for student results in October 2019. Average funds utilisation stands at approximately 69% of the funds disbursed so far. 2iE (Burkina Faso), WACCBIP (Ghana), WACCI (Ghana), CDA (Nigeria), ACEGID (Nigeria) and RWESCK (Ghana) recorded between 85% - 99% fund utilisation rates. Seventeen (17) out of the 22 centres have achieved over 80% of expected results under the project indicators.
10. During discussions, concerns were raised about whether all centres can achieve expected results before the project closes. There were also questions on how funds could be utilised

given the project would be ending soon. It was explained that some centres have ongoing big projects that would use up a significant portion of their remaining funds. Benin was cited as an example. The World Bank emphasised that there is no possibility of an extension and funds earned but not utilised by close of the project would have to be returned to the World Bank or respective governments. It would be impossible to move the remaining funds to the ACE Impact project given the financing agreements for ACE I and ACE Impact are different.

Workshop Evaluation

11. Evaluation of the 10th Workshop held in Djibouti showed positive ratings for the facilitation role of the AAU, National Governments and the World Bank. The World Bank recorded the highest rating on overall facilitation and support, while AAU has highest rating on facilitation and role in workshops and meetings. Overall satisfaction with the project was positive and implementation risks witnessed significant reduction. However, response rates continued to decline despite increasing participation. Procurement and, timeliness/adequacy of response to queries were highlighted as areas to be improved by the World Bank and AAU respectively.
12. The PSC emphasised the need to further investigate declining survey response rates. They noted the survey is very important and the feedback should be taken seriously. The Committee further recommended that the survey should be issued earlier, and more sensitisation done to improve response rates especially as the ACE Impact takes off. On declining ratings, the AAU explained this could partially be because the workshop merges ACE I and ACE Impact.

Decision/Resolution:

- **AAU to investigate reasons for declining survey response rates**
- **AAU to share the workshop survey link to participants in good time and intensify sensitisation**

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

13. Cash available at the start of the financial year (July 2019) was US\$ 278,268.94 while expenditure for the period July – August 2019 totalled US\$ 269,435.10 leaving a balance of US\$ 8,851.84. An amount of US\$ 1,342.61 was spent as support for the ACE Impact project leaving the actual balance at US\$7,509.22.
14. Concerns were raised regarding the lack of funds on the project and the use of ACE Impact funds for ACE I activities. It was made clear that the latter practice is contrary to the World Bank's policies. The World Bank however explained that the practice had been approved within the Bank, was properly documented and thought appropriate given both ACE I and ACE Impact have common activities and 18 ACE I centres are also under the ACE Impact

project. Furthermore, ACE I funds had been used to support the start-up of the ACE Impact project. It was made clear that the situation is being managed carefully and that related expenditures would be reported under the ACE Impact and not under ACE I.

15. Although it was explained that the report included explanatory notes, the PSC still requested that AAU revises the financial performance report to clarify the use of ACE Impact funds and share for the Committee's information.

Decision/Resolution:

- **AAU to revise Financial Report to include clear explanation on use of ACE Impact funds and reshare with the PSC**

PROJECT CLOSING GUIDELINES

16. The AAU and the World Bank would ensure timely results verification, approvals and issuance of no-objections. The Bank emphasised that ACE Impact funds would only be accessible after all ACE I funds have been exhausted. The World Bank explained that the financial agreement was between the governments and the bank and the funds were disbursed as grants to the centres. The PSC requested that clear guidelines for project closing should be communicated to all Focal Points and national teams. The Bank noted that no payments would be paid to any centre from April 2020. Activities not completed by this date will not be paid for and funds cannot be committed either. Concerning committed funds including unpaid tranches of student bursaries, the Bank suggested these could be held in escrow accounts. Against this background, the PSC advised that centres should not commit to new activities going forward. The possibility of a grace period was discussed but not finalised.

Decision/Resolution:

- **World bank to communicate to Focal Points and national teams, clear guidelines on project closing**

COUNTRY ROUND TABLE

17. **Benin:** Two (2) national Review Committee meetings were held and project progress reviewed; total disbursements are at 73% while expenditure was at 21% but procurements are ongoing and should soon improve. There are however not enough funds to process the procurements.
18. **Burkina Faso:** An informal meeting was held to discuss the governance of the centre; a follow up formal meeting of all ACEs is planned for end October 2019 to discuss disbursements.

19. **Cameroon:** Recommendations of earlier meetings have been taken up by the Ministry for Higher Education; implementation plans, and procedure manuals have been approved; there are however some concerns about the project closure date in light of pending results.
20. **Côte d'Ivoire:** The project closing has fortunately been extended to 30th September 2020 giving some time to complete pending results; holding of the national review committee meeting was postponed to allow for the minister's participation.
21. **Gambia:** The country noted it had peculiar arrangements under the project; the project was almost completed but there are still some students in training and are expected to complete by December 2019.
22. **Ghana:** There were no major challenges as shown by results presented by the RFU; a national meeting was held to review project progress and track readiness for the ACE Impact project; all DLR 2.8 milestones have been achieved except one under RWESCK (KNUST) which is expected to be completed soon; all three centres feature among project-wide high performers.
23. **Nigeria:** Nigeria reported significant progress over the reporting period with particular mention of all 10 centres achieving international programme accreditation, and a total earning of over US\$ 3 million.
24. **Senegal:** Senegal reported it had no serious challenges except for procurement delays under CEA-SAMEF and some discrepancies on the disbursement and expenditure figures reported by the World Bank. The centre needs a guarantee to push through its pending procurements.
25. **Togo:**
26. **Industry Representative:** The PSC Member representing industry noted collaboration with industry and internships have been a challenge since the start of the project and therefore the need for frameworks to facilitate effective linkages. Additionally, he called for better management and emphasised that the centres should be seen as an integral part of their host universities. Centres should leverage the current trend where industry is actively involved in curriculum development.

NEXT STEPS

27. Next steps for the project included acceleration of completion activities and spending (including verification and disbursements); preparation of *Implementation Completion Report* (ICR); supervision mission to selected centres; and development of terms of reference for university-industry partnerships. For the PSC, the focus going forward would be oversight and acceleration of the project; agreement on the policy on unutilised funds; and holding of national review committee meetings on project status and closing plans for

the respective countries. Generally, project sustainability, efficient project closure, and future actions would be highlighted. The PSC stressed the need for synergy and stressed that centres should be appropriated by their host institutions

28. The *Implementation Completion Report (ICR)* would assess the extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved and the overall performance of the centres (accountability); draw lessons to inform future World Bank sponsored initiatives in the individual countries or sector; and foster development effectiveness. The major components of the report would therefore focus on achievement of objectives; the link between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact; factors aside the project that could have contributed to the outcomes; trends to justify project success; sources of evidence; and the country context.
29. The World Bank noted it would ensure the ICR reflects the actual achievements of the project and agreed to the proposal to hold an ICR preparation meeting during the upcoming workshop to discuss the format of the report and share with the centres so they can start collecting supporting data. The Bank also noted there were existing templates that could be shared, and it was recommended to include in the report a table showing peculiar industry partnerships and highlight internship related challenges. The ICR would eventually be reviewed by an independent body within the Bank and should therefore be comprehensive. The World Bank plans to incorporate information on project indicators, student satisfaction surveys, graduate tracer study data and the results of the university industry partnership study.

Decision/Resolution:

- **World Bank to share ICR template with AAU for distribution to the ACEs.**

CLOSING

30. The Chair thanked members for their active participation and useful input. The meeting came to a close at 2.15 pm.

AFRICA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE PROJECT

SUPPORTED BY



NIGERIA



GHANA



BENIN



TOGO



BURKINA
FASO



CAMEROUN



SENEGAL



GAMBIA



COTE D'IVOIRE



THE WORLD BANK
IBRD • IDA



AAU



ECOWAS

Fifteenth ACE Project Steering Committee Meeting

Dakar, Senegal

23rd September 2019

PROGRAMME

ACTIVITY	TIME
Arrival of participants/Registration	8:30 – 9.00 am
Welcome address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSC Chair, Prof. Coumba Touré Kane (Senegal) • AAU Secretary General, Prof. Etienne Ehile • Dr. Moustapha Lo, Education Specialist, World Bank 	9:00 –:9.20am
Self-introduction/Housekeeping Announcements	
<u>Agenda Item 1: Project Progress and RFU activities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and confirmation of minutes of the last meeting • Brief update on the ACEs including status of project and key results and DLIs, Mrs. Adeline Addy (M&E Officer, AAU) 	9:20am – 10.45am

ACTIVITY	TIME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on disbursement and funds utilization, Mrs. Himdat Bayusuf (ACE Task Team Leader, World Bank) • Performance measurement of National Governments, AAU and WB, Prof. Jonathan Mba (ACE Coordinator, AAU) • Presentation of AAU financial report and budget, Mr. Maxwell Amo-Hoyte (Finance Director, AAU) 	
<u>COFFEE BREAK</u>	10.45am-11.00am
<p><u>Agenda Item 2: ACE I Project Closing Guidelines</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACE1 to ACE Impact Transition Guidelines for ACEs renewed under ACE Impact • Proposed actions for ACEs that need additional support over last 6 months • Policy on unspent funds following project closing 	11:00am – 11.45am
<p><u>Agenda Item 3: Round table with PSC members</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief update by each PSC member on National review meetings and country priorities 	11.45am– 12:30pm
<p><u>Agenda Item 4: Next Steps and closing</u></p> <p>Key next steps including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACE I next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Sustainability planning for ACE1 project ➢ Ensuring orderly closing of ACE1 project activities ➢ Planning of Implementation Completion Report ➢ Key actions/steps over next 6 months 	12:30 – 1:00pm
Lunch with start of ACE Impact PSC meeting at 14.00pm	1:00pm