



Project Information Document/ Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet (PID/ISDS)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 31-Oct-2017 | Report No: PIDISDSC23408



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Western Africa	Project ID P164546	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (P164546)
Region AFRICA	Estimated Appraisal Date Jun 25, 2018	Estimated Board Date Dec 14, 2018	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development, Ministry of Economic, Finance and Development, Ministry of Economic and Finance, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Economic and Finance	Implementing Agency Economic Community of West African States	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To increase quality, quantity and development relevance of post-graduate education in selected universities through regional specialization.

Financing (in USD Million)

Financing Source	Amount
International Development Association (IDA)	280.00
IDA Grant	20.00
Total Project Cost	300.00

Environmental Assessment Category B-Partial Assessment	Concept Review Decision Track I-The review did authorize the preparation to continue
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Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Regional and Country Context

- 1. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is home to the largest share of the global poor and has the widest poverty gap, where on average, its poor are living much further below the \$1.90 per day extreme poverty threshold compared to other regions.** Out of the 767 million people living below the extreme poverty line, 389 million (51 percent) are in SSA. Three of the predominant attributes of the profile of the poor are poorly educated, young and employed in the agricultural sector. The common drivers of inequality which need to be addressed to reduce the poverty gap are gaps in human capital accumulation, varying access to jobs and income generating opportunities and government interventions to address market-based inequalities.
- 2. The SSA region experienced remarkable growth rates between 2003 and 2013, with an average annual real GDP growth rate of 5.3 percent, largely driven by commodity price boom, but without translating into significant poverty reduction,** partly due to population growth, limited creation of quality jobs and unequal distribution of the benefits of the economic growth. The region has since seen a decline in its growth rate since 2013, dropping to as low as 1.4 percent in 2016, mostly due to the sustained fall in commodity prices and an overall weak global economic growth. West Africa has particularly struggled with a real GDP growth rate down at 1.1 percent due to the recession in Nigeria. The annual real GDP growth rate for the SSA region is projected to show an uptick for 2017 (2.6 percent) through 2022 (3.9 percent).
- 3. To realize strong economic growth and poverty reduction, it requires improved productivity across the various priority sectors, economic diversification and implementation of structural reforms.** Human capital development is essential for increasing productivity and economic diversification among emerging economies to increase productivity and economic diversification. SSA economies currently have high dependency on unskilled labor and natural resources which prevents the region from moving up the value chain and keeps productivity low. Improved and sustainable productivity comes from equipping the workforce with the technical skills required for today's jobs and adaptability to jobs of the future; developing new knowledge, products and processes that are sustainable solutions through applied research; and ability to adapt existing technology and turn it into marketable goods and services that are useful in the African setting are critical. Another important area of improvement needed is in policy research that can support policymakers in making informed decisions in developing strategies for the priority sectors (e.g. education policy research, quantitative economics).
- 4. A set of sector and sub-sector specific high-level skills and applied research important in raising productivity will be targeted.** While this list is not comprehensive, the priority areas include: energy (electricity); extractives (mining, oil, gas); sustainable urban planning; sustainable agriculture; health; safeguards, financial management and procurement management; education (teacher training and policy); ICT; and project management/accountability in fragile states. Of importance to development partners is the low institutional capacity in the region to design and implement development projects effectively, resulting in the reliance on international consultants. Human resource capacity in SSA remains particularly low in the science and technology fields. A survey of executives, shows that for the indicator "Availability of scientists and engineers", Nigeria and Mauritania rank globally 79th and 137th, respectively, out of 137 countries. The share of researchers engaged in engineering and technology related research in 2010 for Senegal and Ghana were 2 and 13



percent, respectively, compared to 62 percent in Singapore (2013). The number of researchers per million inhabitants (FTE) in South Korea in 2014 was 6,899 and only 88 in SSA. Although home to 14 percent of the world's population, the SSA region's share of the global expenditure on R&D as of 2014 was only 0.8 percent, and had remained flat for the prior 5 years. To achieve higher productivity, a highly skilled workforce in the right priority sectors must be created, R&D investments increased and strong engagement between academia and the private sector promoted.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

5. **SSA faces important challenges at all levels of the education system.** While significant gains have been observed in increasing enrollment in primary education, major efforts are still needed to improve access to quality basic education for all – as this provides the foundation for success in post-basic education. The primary challenge for education in Africa is improving learning among students in primary education, but other educational challenges, such as access and relevance of post-primary education to combat youth unemployment and build African capacity are equally important. Supporting the primary education system to improve learning and achieve access for all remains the foundational priority for education in Africa. However, with the advances towards learning for all in primary education and the high labor market returns to post-primary education, millions of young Africans stand to benefit from expansion of quality secondary education, including demand-driven technical vocational education and training (TVET). The higher quality of graduates in teacher education and job-relevant expansion of higher education will also influence primary and secondary education through better teaching and improved completion. Further, strengthening math and science literacy of students in the pre-tertiary education levels will positively influence the quality of students enrolling in related fields at the tertiary level and boost students' interests in science and technology related careers, laying a stronger foundation for research and development (R&D) in the region.

6. **In general, Sub-Saharan Africa's higher education sector is uncompetitive and non-responsive to the region's needs, largely because it lags in three areas: quality of programs, relevance of programs and quantity of graduates.** Consequently, most students from the region seeking postgraduate degrees in the past few decades have obtained them abroad due to the availability of funding and the quality of education. Data from UNESCO shows that in 2014, out of the almost 190,000 (more than 200,000 in 2016) outbound higher education students from West and Central Africa, less than 20 percent are studying in the SSA region. Data for Cameroon shows less than 8 percent studying in the region out of its almost 23,000 outbound students. Nigeria which had about 65,000 outbound students had about 50,000 of them studying outside of the SSA region. To transform higher education systems in the region, including Science and Technology (S&T) research, the quality, expansion/access, and linkages of training and research to SSA's priority needs should be improved.

- i. **Inadequate number of qualified graduates trained in priority sectors.** Currently, there is a shortage of faculty with advanced degrees in priority sectors that can adequately teach and serve as research advisors to students, curricula are outdated and research laboratories are ill-equipped. Although not perfect, global higher education rankings provide a general view of the quality of universities. The most widely used rankings- such as, THE Ranking, Shanghai Ranking, and QS World universities rankings- show only South African universities featuring in the top 500 (Makerere University from Uganda placed 401-500 in the THE Ranking). A recent gap analysis carried out by international experts on the engineering ACE I centers highlighted quality-related issues that cut across these centers. Findings of the gap analysis include: educational objectives of programs are not clearly stated; student learning outcomes are not clearly stated nor are they reviewed; there are no periodical reviews of the needs of the graduates; student admission does not adequately ensure preparedness for engineering; weak processes exist for defining the fundamental and basic coursework that



should be required for students and no mechanisms in place to ensure these are followed; documented and operational processes for assessing, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of the programs do not exist.

- ii. **Limited relevance of post-graduate education and research.** Industry stands to benefit significantly from skilled graduates and research outputs, and should therefore be an active participant in the training of students, through formalized internships, research advisory committees, joint curricula development and teaching, co-funding of research projects, co-supervision of students and co-organizing outreach programs. Yet, in most universities in SSA, industry often tends to be a passive participant in the education of students and in supporting academic research. This leads to a mismatch in skills demand and supply, and misalignment of university-based applied research to priority sector needs.

There is a lack of meaningful national and regional R&D agendas coupled with inadequate financing on the side of governments and industry R&D investments relative to GDP in 1963 for South Korea was 0.24 percent but is now at 4.5 percent. In West and Central Africa, representative numbers include 0.08 percent (Democratic Republic of Congo) and 0.6 percent (Mali). Lessons from the US, South Korea and China suggest a tripartite approach, where academia, industry and governments engage to address knowledge gaps in relation to moving up the value chain. Lessons from ACE I confirm that improved relevance contributes to revenue generation and solutions to challenges (e.g., the ACE-genomics center that tested the first Ebola patient in Nigeria was critical for containment).

- iii. **Limited quantity of graduates, especially in priority sectors.** The region has experienced massive expansion of student enrollment with the majority of public universities in Africa experiencing student enrollment far beyond what they were designed to accommodate. Enrollment increased from 2.5 million in 2000 to 7.4 million in 2015 with only six percent enrolled in Master's and one percent in PhD programs. Despite this expansion, the gross tertiary education enrollment rate was still very low at 8.8 percent (compared to 74 percent in the developed world). In West Africa, the share of tertiary students enrolled in STEM programs, which are critical fields for development, is also low and ranges from only 9 to 32 percent by country. These numbers are significantly lower when considering female enrollment in STEM fields which is 5 and 8 percent for Niger and Ghana, respectively. The low enrollment ratios, coupled with the shortage of skilled labor, indicates the need for expansion of the higher education sector. There has also been a proliferation of private higher education institutions in the region which could complement public universities but are themselves mostly fraught with poor quality programs and lack of accountability.

7. Financing, governance, management of systems and services, and regional integration are tools critical to improving quality, relevance and quantity in the higher education sector but face their own challenges.

- i. Financing and related schemes. Financing for higher education is not sustainable without sufficient funding coming from affluent households and the private sector. Public funding is scarce and will not be able to indiscriminately finance expansion and improved quality of higher education. Based on available data, government spending on tertiary education as a percentage of GDP within the West and Central Africa region is under 4 percent (on average about 22 percent of the overall government education expenditure). Most of higher education students come from relatively affluent households that can contribute in a substantial way to the costs of higher education. Public funding in the SSA region should increasingly be targeted to low-income students or strategic areas of higher education where private investments are not forthcoming, such as S&T. Institutions should supplement public funding with fees, consultancies, and donations.
- ii. Governance of higher education institutions. Weak governance is manifested in internal conflicts between



faculties and departments, strikes, as well as frequent and non-merit-based appointments. Weak governance stems from a lack of a pro-active, transparent, and professional leadership, too much political interference and decisions motivated by other objectives.

- iii. Management of systems and services, including management information systems (MIS), student administration, financial management and procurement are often ineffective representing bottlenecks for institutions to improve quality and quantity of graduates in higher education institutions. The lack of reliable and timely data leads to poor planning, wastage of resources and difficulties in assessing the institutions' performance.
- iv. Regional higher education integration is advantageous because: knowledge can be generated as a public good to solve the common regional problems; the very small national markets for higher education gives very little competition and hence value-for-money (whether public or private). No one country can fund international quality higher education in all the areas required for their economies. Lack of regional coordination in higher education leads to unnecessary replication of efforts and inefficient public investments. In addition, lack of a regional framework for quality assurance and accreditation, hampers mutual recognition of accredited status, comparability of degrees in the region and cross-border mobility of students.

8. **The Africa Centers of Excellence (ACE) Projects are regional specialization programs that promote shared education and research resources, increase internationalization of higher education institutions and increase student mobility in the region.** The first phase was launched in 2014 in West and Central Africa in 22 centers and the second phase in 2016 in East and Southern Africa across 24 centers. It employs a combination of elements including regionality, strong government ownership, competitive selection of centers, results-based financing, independent verification of results, intensive implementation support, partnerships, and a robust monitoring and evaluation system. ACE I has been performing satisfactorily during its three years of implementation. ACE I has seen 11 programs attain international accreditation and several top performing centers emerge. At mid-term, about 12,000 short-term, master's and PhD students have been enrolled in post-graduate programs. More than 4,000 are regional students and over 2,400 students and faculty have participated in an internship in a company or a local institution relevant to their field. The top performing centers have also been able to generate external funding. An example is the Redeemer's University center for genomics of infectious diseases in Nigeria which has been able to generate an additional US\$ 15 million from external sources. The key drivers for these centers have been the strong faculty teams, government and university ownership and visionary center leaders that have attracted international partners as well as additional donor funding. Despite these achievements, the development impact of these centers can be strengthened, including a move towards a more targeted approach in identifying high-level skills, programs and applied research that are in demand, upfront linkages to industry, institutional impact on the ACE host university, and coordination of international partners. Overall, there is a need to scale up the activities within centers of excellence in West and Central Africa which have been performing satisfactorily, and increase the number of participating countries.

Relationship to CPF

9. **The proposed Africa Centers of Excellence for Development Impact Project (ACE III) will be part of the Regional Integration Assistance Strategy for Africa (draft) that emphasizes investment in regional infrastructure, economic integration, and regional public goods.** It is fully aligned with Pillar 1 of the Strategy that focuses on strengthening competitiveness and employment through producing quality highly skilled human resources for priority growth sectors. To this end, ACE III will facilitate economies of scale in the use of facilities, equipment, and staff in specialized fields; to



share innovations and good practices in teaching and learning; to enhance cross-border research networks and nudge institutions towards regionality.

10. **The proposed Project also aligns with the World Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity**, as well as the Bank's 2020 Education strategy "Learning for All" which promotes investments in knowledge and skills across all education subsectors.

11. **Country Partnerships:** The eligible countries to participate in the project include West and Central African countries as well as other francophone countries. Guinea, Burkina Faso and Djibouti have formally expressed interest through their Ministries of Finance. Cameroun, Nigeria, The Gambia, Mali and Niger have expressed interest through their Ministries responsible for Higher Education to Ministry of Finance. Consultations show a keen interest from countries that are part of ACE I as well as countries new to the project. The ACE III project was jointly endorsed by the Ministers of higher education of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in September 2017 with the objective to pool human resources through regional centers of excellence. Further, the project would support the ECOWAS' protocol on education and training which highlights harmonization of certificates and qualifications. The ACE III will support skills development and applied research needed for growth across various sectors including energy, extractives, transport, ICT, Urban planning, agriculture and health, among others. Also under consideration is the area of policy research in economics and sectors like education. This approach has enjoyed strong support from governments, universities and the private sector across the continent as well as support from the Bank Global Practices, development partners and other international organizations.

12. **Regional Partnerships:** The Project builds on and complements other SSA World Bank regional initiatives. This includes ACE I and II that are under implementation in 18 countries. ACE III will build on the lessons from these two projects to scale up and improve impact on development. This continental reach is allowing for important improvements in project design and implementation, networking among countries, leveraging economies of scale for collaboration outside of the SSA region (e.g. Korea, China), and benchmarking among the African sub-regions. The ACE III also aligns with the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET), which seeks to build the technical and scientific skilled labor force for priority sectors, from the technical/vocational level to higher education and research, to support the structural transformation of Africa. The ACE family of projects have so far provided the framework within which PASET's Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF) has been nurtured and now under preparation as a World Bank Project. Nineteen ACE universities across 12 countries submitted data for the pilot PASET Benchmarking exercise in 2016. With the dearth in higher education data, this initiative now supports the establishing of Management Information Systems and graduate tracer studies. ACE III will build the capacity in higher education (teaching and scientific research) by facilitating economies of scale in the use of facilities, equipment, and staff in specialized fields; sharing innovations and good practices in teaching and learning; and enhancing cross-border research networks. In addition, the World Bank is preparing regional investment projects on technical and vocational education and training in several countries in SSA, which have potential synergies in terms of industry engagement and regional implementation arrangements.

13. **Development Partner Partnerships: There is strong interest from development agencies and national research agencies to support Africa higher education and science through the ACE III Program.** There are numerous higher education and research projects being funded by bilateral development partners and national science research councils. There is also a high level of fragmentation which reduces impact. Therefore, the ACE model provides value added to the coordination of higher education interventions (see Section 4). Bilateral funders are interested to coordinate funding to capitalize on strengths and comparative advantage. A September 2017 workshop resulted in partnership commitments



from several bilateral and science research funders¹: These partnerships formalize and strengthen existing relationships between current ACE Centers and global research/education funders. The partnerships planned include: (i) AfD and to provide parallel or co-financing to ACE Centers based upon the World Bank selection and funding model; and (ii) Parallel funding to finance international research and education collaboration between African and international academic institutions. Additional partnerships – supported through the PASET Program – will facilitate university collaboration between Africa and China, Korea and potentially Japan. These partnerships are a win-win situation. The World Bank brings its expertise in policy, country context, ability to influence decision makers, money, convening power and a tested model that has shown results. The international partners bring potential international university partners for the African centers as well as their own experiences as developed or emerging economies in defining their higher education strategies.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

To increase quality, quantity and development relevance of post-graduate education in selected universities through regional specialization.

Key Results (From PCN)

14. Similar to ACE I and II, the proposed ACE III aims to benefit the following:

- a. The students in institutions that will be supported to establish an Africa Center of Excellence as well as those in institutions who will partner with the ACEs across West and Central Africa and the continent at large who will benefit from high quality education and research training in high demand areas;
- b. Employers and other knowledge partners in targeted industries and sectors who will have easy access to high quality/skilled personnel and to applied research to improve productivity;
- c. Faculty and staff from the ACEs who play an active role in improving teaching and research conditions and those from the broader ACE host university that benefit from these improved conditions and capacity building activities offered to the ACEs;
- d. Faculty and students from ACE partner institutions who will benefit from improved capacity of the ACEs; and
- e. The West and Central Africa sub-region will have a network of specialized ACEs for its sustainable development into the future.

15. The proposed PDO indicators:

- i. Share of non-national students in the ACEs (Regional Specialization)
- ii. Number of students enrolled in specialized Master's, PhD and short-term courses/ programs (Quantity of education)
- iii. International program accreditation (Quality of education)
- iv. Externally generated revenue (Relevance Training and Research)
- v. Number of students and faculty with at least 2 months' period internship/apprenticeship in relevant industry/ institution (Relevance of education education)

¹ French Development Agency- AfD, National Research Agency- ANR, National Center for Scientific Research- CNRS, Research Institute for Development-IRD (France); German Academic Exchange Service- DAAD, German Research Foundation- DFG, German Federal Ministry of Education and Research- BMBF/DLR (Germany); Japan Society for the Promotion of Science- JSPS, Japan Science and Technology Agency- JST (Japan); Research Councils- RCUK, Wellcome Trust (UK); and National Science Foundation- NSF (US);



- vi. Number of industry sector partners that have contributed at least US\$ 10,000 to the ACE (Relevance of Training and Research)

16. A maximum of five KPIs will be chosen from this list. The first five are identical to the KPIs for ACE 1, which are working well for monitoring. In the preparations, the team will consider the inclusion of KPIs results around enhanced relevance and impact on development, institutional impact, and potentially regional policy making (as part of regional collaboration).

D. Concept Description

17. **The proposed PDO will be achieved primarily through support to universities and students.** The project will consist of three components. Component 1 will support universities to establish centers of excellence. The centers will focus on post-graduate education (at the master's and PhD levels) and applied research to address regional development challenges that attract regional students, faculty, and firms through excellence, relevance and regional partnerships. The second component will support institutions and governments in the region to purchase technical assistance and education from the ACEs. This would include a window for emerging centers of excellence whose work are highly relevant to the national and/or regional economy, but are not able to attract students from the region. The third component would support regional policymaking, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation, and project facilitation.

Component 1: Establishing New and Scaling up top-performing Africa Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (US\$ 170 - 215 million IDA Credit)

18. This component will have two sub-components. Sub-component 1.1 will provide support to new centers; and Sub-component 1.2 will provide support to existing top-performing centers under ACEI.

19. **Sub-component 1.1: Establishing New Africa Centers of Excellence for development impact (US\$140 – 170 million IDA Credit).** About 25-30 centers will be competitively selected based on a priori selection criteria to receive funding from ACE III. Funding is expected to be in the range of US\$4 - 6 million per ACE over a period of 4-5 years, depending upon the request, available funding, discipline and a detailed review of needs and capacity. About 25 percent of the funding for the new ACEs will be allocated for civil works and equipment but will be less for the already supported ACE I centers.

20. **At least one half of the awards to new ACEs in priority sectors will be targeted towards addressing identified development challenges.** Priority sectors include: engineering (e.g., energy, extractives, ICT), agriculture, health, housing/urban planning, quantitative economics, teacher education (with a focus on math and science education), and transport. For each prioritized development challenge, as part of project preparation, the Bank will undertake consultations with the Bank's global practices, industry associations and regional policymakers to define indicative objectives, education programs and potential priority sectors to ensure the most demanded skills and knowledge needs are covered. The proposal receiving the highest rating within each development challenge will be selected. This seeks to ensure regional priority skills and applied research needs are funded, even if quality of the education and research teams are lower, while maintaining transparency and merit-based evaluation. Further, the proposals receiving the two highest scores with female center leaders will be selected to promote a less unequal gender balance in center leadership.

21. **Sub-Component 1.2: Scaling up Top-Performing Centers from ACE I for institutional and regional Impact (US\$ 30 - 45 million IDA Credit).** The objective of this component is to provide additional funding to 7-12 ACE I centers which have been successful in achieving international quality education and research and impact on development challenges.



Based on the lessons learned under ACE I, additional funding will help these centers scale up activities particularly those that must improve development impact (through concrete sector linkages), regional partnerships to support other institutions in the region, and practices to promote excellence and regionalization at the university-level. These ACEs are expected to be centers of “regional excellence” that will build strong regional networks, leading efforts in quality training of students and drivers of innovative research solutions to development challenges in the region.

22. **Activities and results of the ACEs.** As in ACEs I and II, a results-based framework will be adopted. This means that the project will reward the delivery of predefined results (disbursement -linked indicators- DLIs) with monetary incentives, upon verification that the agreed-upon results have actually been delivered. Each center will prepare, revise and implement its center specific proposal which will ensure efforts to:

- i. Provide international quality post-graduate education to regional and national students focused on a specific regional development challenge. Proposed DLIs: (i) Number of students enrolled with a reward for regional and female students, and (ii) International accreditation.
- ii. Enhance impact of the ACE on development through private and public sector partnerships. This will also include short term training to professionals already working, internship for students, contract research, data collection, policy advice and research, etc. Proposed DLIs: (i) Number of students in internship, (ii) externally generated revenue, and (iii) number of non-academic partners contributing at least \$10,000 per year.
- iii. Deliver research in response to development challenges, including through partnerships with private and public partners. Proposed DLI: number of scientific articles in international reviews
- iv. Improve Governance and management of the ACE to become an institution of excellence. Potential DLIs include: Governance (i) Head of institution or Deans selected through an open, competitive and merit-based process; (ii) At least one third of the functional Institutional Board is external and non-governmental; (iii) national review meetings of ACE progress. Good student management: (i) Adherence to the academic calendar or published institutional student survey; Results reporting: (i) reporting to the regional PASET benchmarking initiative. Regionality: (i) Institutional regionalization strategy; and (ii) Student marketing and student support services for regional students; Quality: International institutional accreditation.
- v. Strengthen regional and international academic partnerships to raise the quality of education at partner institutions and network partners and to raise the ACE’s capacity to manage these partnerships. Results will be achieved through regional students and revenue generated.

23. The above-mentioned results are similar to those that have worked well for ACE 1 and, with two important modifications – ACE III (i) has a stronger focus on development impact through outreach to the private and public sectors, and (ii) has an increased focus on institutional and governance impact.

24. **Selection of Centers:** The selection of centers will be based upon an independent expert evaluation of the institutional proposals. The proposed evaluation criteria are (i) a focus on one of the identified development priorities; (ii) demonstrated excellence in teaching and research; (iii) having established upfront strong sector partnerships, including co-funding agreements; (iv) having ownership of and support from the government and university, (v) having established regional and international academic partnerships; and (vi) having potential to scale up regional collaboration. The competition will be open to both public and private ACEs subject to Governments’ acceptance of submission of proposals from private institutions. Independent subject-matter and industry expert-panels will evaluate the proposals through a combination of desk reviews and onsite evaluations. The final selection decision will be made by the regional ACE Steering Committee considering, in a rule-based objective manner, the need for a reasonable equitable balance across countries, language-groups, and coverage of development priorities.



Component 2: Demand-Driven Regional support from the ACEs (US\$ 75- 95 million, IDA Credit)

25. The objective of this component is twofold: to (i) develop emerging centers of excellence that are highly relevant to the national and regional economy, but cannot yet attract regional students through demand-driven regional technical assistance with investments; and (ii) support governmental purchase of regional technical assistance and education to the ACEs in a demand-driven manner. The component is comprised of two sub-components:

26. **Sub-Component 2.1: Demand-driven Regional Support for Emerging Centers of Excellence (US\$ 35-55 million IDA credits).** This sub-component seeks to support institutions that are not yet in a position to become a regional center of excellence within a critical area of national and regional development relevance. This sub-component will target West and Central African countries with weaker higher education institutions (e.g., Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Niger, Congo, etc.). Performance indicators considered include (i) new programs established/upgraded; (ii) sector support; (iii) number of students; (iv) establishment of management and fiduciary systems, and (v) possibly regional accreditation. The funding will support technical assistance /partnership with an ACE (funded under Component 1) to assist the emerging center with improving the quality and relevance of education through an institutional tailored package of support including faculty short-term and longer term training on-site and at the ACE, curriculum development, visiting faculty to cover capacity gaps, quality assurance and management support, advice on investments, and so forth. This TA would be entirely regional services, meaning, select ACEs in countries outside of the emerging center's country will provide the TA and work towards the establishment of regional networks of institutions within the same fields. Given the glaring needs for functioning basic facilities to improve teaching and learning in most of these institutions, funding towards these needs is necessary for the technical assistance to be effective. These emerging centers will not be expected to host regional ACE students as is the case under Component 1. The appropriate selection mechanism and whether this sub-component could be results-based or not will be explored during preparation. This window represents an incremental innovation from the support to the Gambia institutions under ACE 1, which is successful, but could be more tailored to each institution's strategic development need, including the need for a minimum of infrastructure support.

27. **Sub-component 2.2. Demand-driven regional higher education and research services (US\$ 30 - 40 million IDA Credit):** This component seeks to enhance regional exchange of higher education services and thereby boost regional specialization. The sub-component will increase the number of regional students and amount of externally generated revenue of the ACEs through the provision of regional services (e.g., faculty and civil service training, scholarships, curriculum development, and joint research schemes). It will be accessible to all interested participating countries. Countries would receive funding to competitively purchase higher education services from Centers outside their country.

28. This technical assistance builds on the "Gambian model". To date, the Gambia trained more than 130 students (master's and PhDs) across several ACE I centers through scholarship schemes. It has also purchased ACE services to upgrade its diploma engineering course to engineering level through a package. In this case, the scheme will be more structured with stronger integration of returning students into academia and industry in their home countries and will have closer linkages with national strategies in skills.

Component 3: Enhance Regional Policymaking, Monitoring, and Facilitation (US\$ 15-30 million IDA Grant).

29. **Establishing Regional Technical Higher Education and Skills Agency within ECOWAS to enhance Regional Capacity and Evaluation.** This component will be financed through a Regional IDA grant to ECOWAS to establish the Regional Higher Education and Skills Technical Agency (RHESTA). The Agency will enhance the regional ownership of the centers of excellence program by increasing regional political and institutional ownership of the centers of excellence program. Key activities include regional policy harmonization of higher education policy including recognition of degrees, quality assurance and student financing policies. This component will also include the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU)



which will be funded through a grant to ECOWAS in which ECOWAS will contract the Association of African Universities. The Association of African Universities (AAU), the current host of the RFU for ACE I will be contracted out to deliver the RFU activities for the first two years of the project. This will allow for a gradual transition of RFU activities to the newly established regional technical higher education and skills agency Each staff member of the RFU will have clear terms of reference with the staff recruited under the regional technical higher education and skills agency also competitively recruited.

30. The RFU will support:

- i. capacity building, knowledge sharing and coordination between the ACEs, for example through joint lessons learning as well as implementation of a communications plan;
- ii. regional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities to improve and assess the performance of the selected institutions, most importantly regular six monthly site visits of centers from experts and their participating in advisory committees. This also includes technical audits, collection of academic data and topic-wise evaluations and coordinating tracer studies and benchmarking,
- iii. technical assistance on regional higher education financing and other key topics affecting policy making on regional higher education science and technology agenda; and
- iv. activities required for regional project facilitation, including regular regional workshops and steering committee meetings.

SAFEGUARDS

A. Project location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

The Project will be in multiple countries in West and Central Africa region at some institutions of higher learning. The project will select these centers from the existing institutions. The project aims to focus on quality enhancements of these institutions, where majority of the funding will be on "softer items" such as faculty development, curriculum update, scholarships, and learning resources.

A fraction of the project funding will involve construction, rehabilitation and extensions of the selected institutions of facilities as well as equipment of facilities. There will be no new land acquisition for these centers because the extension, rehabilitation and construction will be on existing sites.

B. Borrower's Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

The borrower's institutional capacity for the implementation of the safeguard policies will be assessed and the borrower will benefit from guidance of the Bank's Safeguards specialists.

C. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Alexandra C. Bezeredi, Social Safeguards Specialist

Fabienne Anne Claire Prost, Environmental Safeguards Specialist



D. Policies that might apply

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	Yes	Environmental and social impacts of construction, rehabilitation and extensions of academic institutions are expected to be small-scale and site specific. Since the location are not known, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will be prepared, reviewed, consulted upon, approved and disclosed before appraisal. At implementation, Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) will be prepared for each candidate institution to manage environmental and social impacts. ESMPs will be prepared, consulted upon, and disclosed before appraisal.
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	No	Natural habitats will not be affected by project activities.
Forests OP/BP 4.36	No	The project will not involve forestry activities.
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	The project will not involve the use or purchase of pesticides.
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	No	Physical Cultural Resources will not be affected by project activities.
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	TBD	The project might involve Indigenous Peoples.
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	No	The project will not finance activities that involve land acquisition leading to physical and economic displacement.
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	The project will not involve dams.
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	The project is not on International Waterways.
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	The project is not in Disputed Areas.

E. Safeguard Preparation Plan

Tentative target date for preparing the Appraisal Stage PID/ISDS

Jun 20, 2018

Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed. The specific studies and their timing should be specified in the Appraisal Stage PID/ISDS

The Project will prepare an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which will, among others, contain a Screening checklist, site specific Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) will be prepared during implementation.



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