Early Warning System

WB-P513636

Africa Centers of Excellence for Innovation and Economic Growth

Quick Facts

Countries	Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast
Financial Institutions	World Bank (WB)
Status	Proposed
Bank Risk Rating	B
Voting Date	2026-11-17
Borrower	Governments of Ivory Coast, Guinea and Gambia - Association of African Universities
Sectors	Agriculture and Forestry, Education and Health, Energy, Industry and Trade, Infrastructure
Investment Type(s)	Grant, Loan
Loan Amount (USD)	$ 141.00 million
Grant Amount (USD)	$ 24.00 million
Project Cost (USD)	$ 188.20 million

Project Description

According to the Bank’s website, the objective of this project is to increase the quality and quantity of skilled graduates for jobs and to foster innovation in priority sectors.

West and Central Africa faces a persistent skills gap, where high graduate unemployment coexists with employer demand for qualified technical and professional talent. ACE Innovate responds to this by channeling investment into five priority sectors selected for their potential to create more and better jobs: agribusiness, energy and infrastructure, health care, manufacturing, including mineral value chains, and tourism, with digital technologies serving as a cross-cutting enabler and, where relevant, a sector in its own right. In these sectors, the region's universities, polytechnics, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions have historically struggled to produce graduates whose skills match what employers need, and applied research has rarely translated into practical innovation or technology transfer at scale.

Activities are organized into four components:
- Component 1 supports ACEs through competitive grants focused on innovation and labor market relevance: curriculum redesign in priority sectors; postgraduate enrollment (master's, PhD, bachelors, and short-term professional courses); challenge-driven research oriented toward real-world industry problems; technology transfer and commercialization of research outputs; entrepreneurship support and business incubation; faculty development and accreditation; upskilling and reskilling through professional short-courses; and workplace-focused learning and industry internships. Limited civil works, capped at 25 percent of center-level funding and confined to existing university footprints, may be supported to upgrade laboratories, workshops, and research facilities. These construction activities will be screened for environmental and social risks, with particular attention to occupational health and safety of workers and potential impacts on surrounding communities.
- Component 2 strengthens selected TVET and polytechnic institutions as RFTIs, paired with their respective ACEs in the same sector. Supported activities include enrollment, industry-aligned curriculum design, practical training facilities and industry-standard equipment, faculty development informed by industry practice, and reskilling and upskilling programs for workers and out-of-school youth. Equipment procurement and limited construction within existing TVET footprints are anticipated and will similarly be subject to environmental and social screening. Both ACE-RFTI pairs are governed by shared Sector Engagement Panels with at least 50 percent private sector representation, ensuring demand-driven curricula.
- Component 3 fosters regional collaboration through support sector-specific technical networks, a regional learning and benchmarking agenda, joint programs, collaborative research, and structured cross-border faculty and student exchanges.
- Component 4 covers project management, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation, with the Association of African Universities (AAU) serving as Regional Facilitation Unit, supported by national-level Project Implementation Units in each participating country. A portion of disbursements are tied to performance-based conditions rewarding achievements in areas like enrollment, research outputs and innovation, and external revenue generation.

Early Warning System Project Analysis

The environmental and social risk rating is assessed as **moderate**, as the project does not involve activities that have a high potential for harming people or the environment, is located away from environmentally or socially sensitive areas, and risks are predictable, site-specific and low in magnitude. The project will be implemented in existing universities campuses and will not impact natural habitats, forests, protected areas, high-biodiversity or critical habitats. Key risks include those associated with minor civil works for the renovation works, such as occupational and community health and safety risks (noise, vibration, labor and traffic accidents, etc.), electronic waste generation, efficient use of resources, the potential for elite capture or exclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups from project benefits and the rise of grievances and discontent from non-project beneficiaries.

Investment Description

- World Bank (WB)

Total Project Cost: US$ 188.20 million
IDA Credit: US$ 141.00 million
IDA Grant: US$ 24.00 million

Contact Information

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ACCESS TO INFORMATION

To submit an information request for project information, you will have to create an account to access the Access to Information request form. You can learn more about this process at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/access-to-information/request-submission

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM OF THE WORLD BANK

The World Bank Inspection Panel is the independent complaint mechanism and fact-finding body for people who believe they are likely to be, or have been, adversely affected by a World Bank-financed project. If you submit a complaint to the Inspection Panel, they may investigate to assess whether the World Bank is following its own policies and procedures for preventing harm to people or the environment. You can contact the Inspection Panel or submit a complaint by emailing ipanel@worldbank.org. Information on how to file a complaint and a complaint request form are available at: https://www.inspectionpanel.org/how-to-file-complaint

Bank Documents

- Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary (ESRS) - Africa Centers of Excellence for Innovation
- Concept Project Information Document (PID)