



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS AFRICAINES

اتحاد الجامعات الافريقيه

***Mobilising Regional Capacity Initiatives (MRCI):
A Programme for Revitalizing Higher Education in Africa***

ANNOUNCEMENT & CALL FOR PROPOSALS

1.0 Mobilising Regional Capacity Initiatives Program

The Association of African Universities (AAU) is pleased to announce a new programme - ***Mobilising Regional Capacity Initiatives (MRCI)***. Funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, the programme aims to build regional capacity to support African higher education institutions in promoting sustainable development and poverty eradication on the continent.

2.0 Background

Until a few years ago, a general policy position shared by many African leaders and their development partners was that as investment in higher education in Africa yielded less social return than in basic education, it was proper to focus investment in basic at the expense of higher education. This position together with the economic decline in most African countries led to inadequate support for the sector, which in turn, resulted in a decrease in the effectiveness and quality of higher education generally on the continent.

A significant shift in position over the past decade or so has seen the increasingly explicit acknowledgment by African political leadership, at national and continental levels, including the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), of the indispensable role of a revitalized and refocused higher education system in any credible programme for the development of Africa in the 21st century. Thus, the African Union identified the revitalization of the African Higher Education as a major agenda item in its Plan of Action 2004-2007, and has now included higher education, for the first time ever, as one of seven focal areas of the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015). Outside Africa, the report of the *Commission for Africa*, and the Gleneagles Summit of 2005, both moved along similar lines.

The MRCI for revitalizing higher education in Africa is perhaps, the first major concrete result of this growing consensus on the positive contribution that higher education could make to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction.

3.0 The Challenge Fund

At the centre of the MRCI is a *Challenge Fund* for strengthening partnerships between the AAU and regional and national bodies representing higher education institutions in Africa, as part of the drive for poverty eradication and sustainable development of the continent. The particular role of the AAU is to mobilize resources and help enhance the capacities of its members and regional partners, which in turn will support the contribution of their constituents and networks to the development process throughout the continent.

The choice of the AAU to manage the Challenge Fund is in recognition of the Association's niche in networking, its continental reach and mandate, and its partnerships with continental, regional, and national bodies across all geographic and linguistic boundaries.

4.0 Who can apply?

The *Challenge Fund* is open, on a competitive basis, to higher education institutions, research centres as well as bodies representing higher education institutions in all African countries.

5.0 Project Focus

Projects must aim at facilitating the contribution of African higher education institutions and research centres to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through the identification of policy-oriented research and the development of policy frameworks, inputs and forms of support for policy development. Of particular interest will be MDG-related projects with focus on one or more of the following areas:

- Information and Communication Technology
- Leadership Development
- Quality promotion and quality assurance
- HIV/AIDS
- Pedagogy and Curriculum Development
- Gender and Culture in Higher Education
- Public, Private and Community Partnerships.

Preference will be given to projects with participation of cross-country networks involving at least two African countries.

6.0 Proposal Format

6.1 Major Components of the Proposal:

The Proposal shall have the following components:

(a) **Executive Summary:** This section should set out the theme of the project, a brief summary of the problems and issues that it aims to address and its relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The methodology and main activities should also be summarized.

(b) **Proposal Details:** The following structure should be followed:

(i) **Description of the Applicant:** This Section should provide brief background information on the applicant institution or agency. It should set out the composition of the team that would manage and conduct the project. Curricula vitae of the project leader and team must be provided in an appendix.

(ii) **Problem Statement/Needs Assessment :** This section should establish the needs that will be addressed through the proposed activities. The needs should be directly related to the areas of focus and the MDG's.

(iii) **Proposed Scope of Work:** This section, the primary focus of the narrative portion of the proposal should demonstrate the responsiveness to the areas of focus by identifying the specific component activities or products proposed to address the identified needs. It should provide information on goals, activities, and timelines in a detailed work-plan, indicating inputs, outputs, expected outcomes and performance indicators against activities.

(iv) **Duration:** The project must be completed within two years of commencement

(c) **Proposed Budget:** The proposal should provide a realistic expenditure profile for each activity, in a budget not exceeding one hundred thousand pounds sterling (£100,000) for the project period which must not exceed two years.

6.2 Format and signing of proposals:

Two hard copies and an electronic copy of the proposal, signed by or on behalf of the applicant shall be forwarded, as indicated below.

7.0 How to Apply

7.1 Applications from institutions and research centres located in *Southern Africa* (Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Reunion Island, Saint Helena Island, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) should be sent to the “The Executive Director, Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), P. O. Box 662, Wits 2050, South Africa, Tel: 27-11-717-8010/8322, Fax: 27-11-717-8382, Email:operations@sarua.org , with electronic copy to: the Coordinator, MRCI, Association of African Universities (AAU)(address below)

7.2 Applications from institutions and research centres located in *Eastern Africa* (Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Seychelles Islands, Tanzania, Uganda, and Somalia) should be sent to “The Executive Secretary ,The Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), East African Development Bank – 3rd Floor, Plot 4 Nile Avenue P.O.Box 7110, Kampala, Uganda. Tel. 256-41-256251. Fax: 256-41-34200.Email: iuc@infocom.co.ug , with electronic copy to: the Coordinator, MRCI, Association of African Universities (AAU)(address below)

7.3 *All other applications* must be sent directly to the **Association of African Universities (AAU)**. (address below)

8.0 Deadline

Deadline for applications is May 30, 2008. All applications must be delivered on or before the deadline.

9.0 Processing of Applications:

All applications will be assessed by a Review Panel and grants for winning proposals awarded in July 2008.

Project documents and other relevant information can be accessed at www.aau.org.

For clarification and further information, please contact

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