



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES  
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS AFRICAINES

اتحاد الجامعات الافريقيه

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

**MRCI CYCLE 3 GRANTS - 2009**

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**1.0 Mobilising Regional Capacity Initiatives Programme**

The Mobilising Regional Capacity Initiative (MRCI) is a programme of the Association of African Universities, which is funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom. The MRCI programme, which commenced in 2007 aims to build regional capacity to support African higher education institutions in promoting sustainable development, meeting the Millennium Development Goals and poverty eradication on the continent.

**2.0 Background**

The World Conference on higher education held in 2009 has emphasized the vital importance of higher education for the socio-cultural and economic development of Africa, and for building the future, for which the younger generations will need to be equipped with new skills, knowledge and ideals.

During the 1980s and 1990s, few international governments, agencies and donors made significant investment in higher education because it was not considered an investment priority. 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.

Today, African political leadership, at the national and continental levels, including the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), have recognized the indispensable role of a revitalized and refocused higher education system as an important driver for the development of Africa in the new knowledge economy. The African Union identified the revitalization of the African university as a major agenda item in its Plan of Action 2004-2007. The sixth Assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union, meeting in Khartoum in January 2006, included higher education, for the first time ever, as one of the seven focal areas of the Second Decade of African Education (2006-2015), which was launched at conference of African Ministers of Education in Maputo, Mozambique in September 2006 . Flagship projects, including NEPAD's promotion of Regional Centres of Excellence, drive in the same direction. At the international level, the Commission for Africa, set up by Tony

Blair, the former British Prime Minister, and the Gleneagles Summit of 2005, both moved along similar lines.

The preceding comments indicate the growing appreciation of the potential of higher education as a key part of the renewed drive for Africa's development. The MRCI programme for revitalizing higher education in Africa launched in 2007 is perhaps, one of the first major concrete results of the increasing awareness of the role of higher education in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction in Africa.

### 3.0 The Challenge Fund

At the centre of the MRCI is a *Challenge Fund* for the strengthening of partnerships between the AAU and the sub-regional and national bodies representing higher education institutions in Africa, as part of the drive for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, poverty eradication and sustainable development of the continent. The role of the AAU in this programme is to mobilize resources and facilitate interaction in order to enhance the capacities of its members and partner organizations, which in turn will support the contribution of their constituents and networks to the development process throughout the continent.

### 4.0 The Projects:

The overall goal of the Projects supported with the precedes of the Challenge Fund is for Higher Education Institutions to make significant contributions at national level to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to national poverty reduction strategies.

Proposals are hereby invited from:

- (a) Regional/ sub-regional higher educational organizations,
- (b) Networks of higher education institutions, including institutions in more than 2 countries in an established research network across the African continent.

The project proposals to the Challenge Fund may cover a range of themes and topics but their common focus will be on the transformation of Higher Education Institutions, particularly in relation to their role in national poverty reduction and in meeting the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals.

The projects to be supported must be able to demonstrate ability to yield the following four major outputs, namely:

- (i) **Information Sharing** on good practice in relation to innovation and reform.
- (ii) **Policy-oriented research leading to policy briefs** that highlight new ways in which universities can contribute to national programmes for reaching the MDGs.

(iii) **The development of policy frameworks for addressing key issues affecting higher education** (e.g. public/private partnerships, schemes for increasing student enrolment from poorly represented groups, incentive schemes for increasing the role of women in management, effective involvement of higher education in poverty reduction strategies, etc.

(iv) **Contributions to national and or regional developments**, in areas relating to the Millennium Development Goals.

## 5.0 Proposal Format

The Proposal shall have the following components:

(i) **Title Page:** This is a cover page with the Title of Project, and Name and addresses of the lead Institution, including the email address and other contact details of the lead researcher / networks/ institutions.

(ii) **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 as it relates to the expected programme outcomes listed in (2) above. The methodology and main activities should also be summarized.

(ii) **Background Information and Literature Survey:** Background literature survey that will be necessary for justifying the project should be provided. Past works by the researchers on areas related to the project should also be provided. All available background work and information on the subject matter will be necessary.

(iii) **Problem Statement and Justification:** 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.

(iv) **Proposed Work Plan:** 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.

(v) **Detailed Expected Outputs:** List out the expected outputs and the Activities that had been set out to achieve each of the listed outputs.

(vii) **Project Outputs against Challenge Fund Outputs:** This is one of the important sections of the proposal. Explain how your project outputs will meet the specific Programme outputs of the Challenge Fund as indicated in (4) above, including:

(a) *Information Sharing* on good practice in relation to innovation and reform.

(b) Policy-oriented research leading to policy briefs that highlight new ways in which universities can contribute to national programmes for reaching the MDGs.

(c) The development of policy frameworks for addressing key issues affecting higher education.

(d) Contributions to national and or regional developmen

(viii) **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 12 - 18 months. Details of the budget for each of the proposed project activities should be provided, in addition to a Summary of the budget. The project will not support bursaries, scholarships, and par-diems and meals. Limited travels can be considered only where necessary.

(ix) **Duration:** The project must be completed within 12 - 18 months of award.

(x) **References:** Full bibliographic references cited in the proposal should be provided here ( as done for Journal articles).

(xi) **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. One page abridged curricula vitae of each of the project leader and team members must be provided in an appendix.

(xi) Certificate of incorporation or registration of the organization / Network and or the lead institution.

(xii) Letter of Institutional / Organization support for the proposal, officially produced and signed by the Head or the Chief Executive of the Organization or the participating institutions in the network.

#### **6.0 Format of proposals:**

All proposals should be sent electronically, and with a cover letter to the e-mail address indicated below.

#### **7.0 Deadline**

*Deadline for applications is **October 16, 2009**.* All applications and their supporting documents must be submitted electronically on or before the deadline.

#### **8.0 Processing of Applications:**

All applications will be assessed by the MRCI programme and only proposals which are short-listed for support will be contacted not later than November 30, 2009. Correspondence will not be entered into with proposals that are not short-listed. Successful proposals will be informed after consultations with the DFID. Outcomes of this Call and other relevant information about the programme can be accessed at [www.aau.org](http://www.aau.org).

For clarification and further information, please contact  
Coordinator

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