

ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

**AAU STRATEGIC PLAN
2011 – 2015**

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FOREWORD

With this, the second strategic plan in its history, the Association of African Universities seeks to move closer to its vision of being the advocate for higher education in Africa, with the capacity to assist its member organizations in meeting national and continental needs. Over the next four years, the Association looks forward to strengthening its ability to work with its member institutions in enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education and contributing to development in Africa.

This plan builds on AAU's first strategic plan (2003-2010), approved by the Conference of Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents (COREVIP) in March 2003, which set the stage for collective and collaborative efforts on the part of African higher education institutions in pursuit of common goals.

We wish to thank all those who, as of 2010, took the initiative of continuing the planning process in order to formulate this follow-up Strategic Plan. The staff of the Secretariat set the process in motion through a three-day retreat, followed by the development of an initial draft. Various stakeholders have since provided feedback and valuable input, resulting in the final version that is being submitted to COREVIP for approval at its May 2011 meeting. To all of you, we owe a debt of gratitude.

We are confident that, over the 2011-2015 planning period, AAU will make significant progress toward the achievement of its ambitious goals. We extend our thanks, in advance, to governments, including the government of Ghana, AAU's host country, to our donors and funding partners, to our member institutions, and to our newest stakeholders and partners in the industrial and productive sectors, for their moral and material support. With your confidence and help, we shall attain our goals, and we shall make a difference.

President

Secretary-General

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

The Association of African Universities (AAU) was founded on November 12, 1967. In 1970, it set up its headquarters in Accra, Ghana, with a membership of 34 public universities. As of May 2011, the AAU comprised 262 public and private institutions of higher education drawn from 45 African countries.

Vision

To be the advocate for higher education in Africa, with the capacity to assist its member organizations in meeting national and continental needs.

Mission

To enhance the quality and relevance of higher education in Africa and strengthen its contribution to African development by:

- Supporting the core functions of higher education institutions (HEIs);
- Facilitating and fostering collaboration of African HEIs; and
- Providing a platform for discussions on emerging issues.

Core Values

- Transparency and Accountability
- Fairness and Representativeness
- Excellence and Professionalism
- Institutional Sustainability
- Teamwork and Collegiality

Core Functions

- Promote interchange and co-operation;
- Collect and disseminate information;
- Promote co-operation in curriculum development and in degree equivalences;
- Encourage increased contacts with the international academic world;
- Study the needs of African universities and co-ordinate the means to meet them;
- Encourage the use of African languages; and
- Organize higher education seminars and conferences.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The AAU'S first Strategic Plan, covering the period 2003-2010, was developed and approved at the COREVIP meeting held in Mauritius in 2003. The formulation of the current plan, through a bottom-up and participatory process provides an opportunity to assess the impact and consolidate the achievements of the initial Strategic Plan. A

review of the out-going plan has led to the identification of unfinished business and goals and strategies for the next four years.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN: INTERNAL CONTEXT

Diversity of HEIs in Africa represents both a challenge and an opportunity. At present, approximately one-third of the nearly 800 tertiary institutions in Africa are members of AAU. The growing number and diversity of HEIs in Africa offer the opportunity for the AAU to expand its membership, and set the pace for accountability, quality assurance, and enhanced membership services.

An analysis of AAU Stakeholders reveals the variety and extent of their expectations: better service to African HEIs, and assistance and support in meeting higher education goals; support for leadership development; effective and efficient management; financial viability and self-sufficiency; effective and efficient implementation of the Strategic Plan and core programmes; and contribution to development.

Over the past ten years, the AAU Secretariat has enjoyed success in implementing a number of projects in diverse areas. At the same time, it faces considerable constraints and challenges. A **SWOC Analysis** sets out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the AAU Secretariat, the results of which provide a foundation on which to identify strategic goals, objectives and actions, and to build a robust Strategic Plan.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN: EXTERNAL CONTEXT

The State of Higher Education in Africa

Higher education in Africa has been affected by a range of economic and social problems: comparatively low enrolment at all levels; stretched institutional facilities and capacities; insufficient economic, political and logistical support for higher education from African Governments and corporations; weak private sector support and an undeveloped culture of private contributions to universities; underdeveloped linkages among universities, industry and governments, and the social and productive sectors of the economy; and human capacity issues such as an ageing faculty and the “brain drain.”

Globally, there has been a trend toward the rapid development of ICT and the creation of networks of knowledge generation and dissemination. However, the gap between Africa and the industrialized countries with respect to ICT and R&D activity continues to grow. In general, the continent is lagging behind in the global information and technology revolution. HEIs are ill-prepared and ill-equipped to play a leadership role because of the inadequate development of their own information infrastructure.

At the same time, conflicts and wars continue to accelerate the brain drain and disrupt academic work. The continued existence of repressive regimes, the restriction of freedom of expression, along with extensive political corruption, all work against the

generation and application of knowledge and constrain socio-economic development. This points to a need for greater self-reliance of African higher education institutions, as well as cooperation among them, in such areas as training and research, academic and student exchanges and harmonized reforms of curricula.

5. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2011-2015

The main strategic focus of the plan is to build the capacity of the Secretariat and member institutions to provide quality higher education and to facilitate access to the increasing population of young people on the continent. AAU will also develop strong relationships with development partners, regional and sub-regional bodies, student associations and university communities within and outside Africa. A new emphasis on stakeholder relations and university-industry linkages, more specifically, has the potential to meet the educational and development needs across the continent.

The goals of the Strategic Plan fall into three broad categories, under which are a total of seven (7) Key Result Areas (KRAs). A “Logframe Matrix” is attached as Appendix 2. It sets out the seven KRAs, and for each of them the objectives, strategies, programmes/projects/initiatives, output targets and current or potential implementing partners are indicated.

- 1. Organizational matters specific to AAU:**
 - Strengthening Capacity for Service Delivery at the AAU Secretariat
 - AAU Membership Size, Quality and Commitment

- 2. Capacity to assist and serve member institutions:**
 1. Strengthening HEIs’ Delivery Capacity in Africa
 2. Knowledge Generation, Management and Dissemination
 3. Community and Student Engagement in HEIs

- 3. Capacity to meet broader societal needs:**
 - Engagement with African and International Partners in Development for Improved Collaboration
 - Supporting HEIs’ Response to Local and Regional Challenges

6. IMPLEMENTATION

AAU will continue to build and strengthen the capacity of staff to ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan. In addition, key personnel will be recruited and trained in the areas where staffing levels are currently low. Performance-based compensation, such as bonuses and extra allowances, may be used to encourage the achievement of results. The organizational structure has been modified so as to be most appropriate for implementation of the Strategic Plan (the current Organogram is attached as Appendix 3).

AAU's activities will be carried out through programmes/projects/initiatives, using project coordinators, officers and staff. As much as possible, however, AAU will continue to involve member institutions as well as strategic partners in implementing the various projects so as to engender commitment and ownership, and also build capacity for project/programme delivery in member institutions.

The risks inherent in so ambitious a plan have been evaluated and measures developed to manage or mitigate those risks. A strategy for funding the actions set out in the Strategic Plan is proposed, including such activities as fundraising, submitting funding proposals to a greater range of agencies, seeking in-kind donations, and increasing member subscriptions.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Measuring success

Baseline data will be collected to accompany the observations made in the Strategic Plan. Some thought will be given as to what "success" would look like at the end of the strategic planning period and what metrics are most appropriate for assessing whether the actions have been successful.

Performance Indicators

Specific, measurable, realistic and time-bound output targets will be developed to assess the extent to which the objectives have been attained during the plan period.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be monitored periodically. This will include systematic documentation, analysis and reporting of performance in key result areas.

Annual reviews of the Strategic Plan will be conducted to assess the attainment of annual targets. A mid-term review will be undertaken in 2013 to assess progress made thus far and make changes if necessary. Finally, a comprehensive end-of-plan review will be conducted by the end of 2015. A detailed report will be prepared to cover all aspects of plan implementation, successes and constraints as well as lessons learnt.

ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

STRATEGIC PLAN (2011-2015)

1. INTRODUCTION: THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Background

The Association of African Universities (AAU) was founded on November 12, 1967 in Rabat, Morocco, following the recommendations of the conference on “The Future of Higher Education in Africa” held under the auspices of UNESCO in Antananarivo, Madagascar, in September 1962, and the meeting of the heads of higher education institutions in Africa, held in Khartoum, Sudan in 1963. At the founding conference in Morocco, a constitution was adopted, an executive board elected, and officers appointed. The Association set up its headquarters in Accra, Ghana, in 1970 and has since worked in three languages: English, French and Arabic.

Starting with a membership of 34 public universities, the Association has grown into a body which as of May 2011 comprised 262 public and private institutions of higher education drawn from 45 African countries. The AAU provides a forum for reflection, consultation, networking, cooperation and collaboration on issues and activities of mutual interest. Over the years, this forum has also provided for a continual review of the Association’s own performance and that of its member institutions.

Motto

The AAU Today: *The Voice of Higher Education in Africa*

Vision

To be the advocate for higher education in Africa, with the capacity to assist its member organizations in meeting national and continental needs.

Mission

AAU’s mission is to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education in Africa and strengthen its contribution to African development by:

- Supporting the core functions of higher education institutions (HEIs), namely: teaching, learning, research and community engagement;
- Facilitating and fostering collaboration of African HEIs among themselves and with other HEIs outside the continent; and

- Providing a platform for discussions on emerging international issues affecting higher education.

Core Values

The following Core Values will guide the AAU in its strategies, programmes and activities:

- Transparency and Accountability
- Fairness and Representativeness
- Excellence and Professionalism
- Institutional Sustainability
- Teamwork and Collegiality

Core Functions

The AAU is mandated by its Constitution to:

- Promote interchange and co-operation among universities in Africa;
- Collect, classify and disseminate information on higher education and research, particularly in Africa;
- Promote co-operation among universities in curriculum development and in the determination of equivalence of degrees;
- Encourage increased contacts between its members and the international academic world;
- Study and make known the educational and related needs of African universities and, as far as practicable, co-ordinate the means whereby those needs may be met;
- Encourage the development and wider use of African languages; and
- Organize, encourage and support seminars and conferences between African academics, administrators and others dealing with higher education in Africa.

Governance Structure

The governance structure of the AAU is made up of the General Conference, the Conference of Rectors, Vice-Chancellors and Presidents of African Universities (COREVIP), the Governing Board and its Standing Committees, and the Secretariat. The general functions of these bodies are as follows:

The General Conference: an assembly of representatives of all member institutions, which meets once every four years¹ with the purpose of:

¹ The last General Conference was held in 2009.

- Assessing the activities implemented over the previous four years against the background of a programme and a budget approved at the previous Conference;
- Approving the plan of activities and budget for the following four-year period; and
- Electing the governing bodies and officers of the Association including the President and three (3) Vice-Presidents, from among the Vice-Chancellors, Presidents and Rectors of the member universities.

The COREVIP: an assembly of the chief executive officers of member institutions or their representatives, which meets every two years² with the purpose of:

- Examining collectively themes identified as common concerns and priorities for the development of higher education in member institutions;
- Making recommendations primarily to members, as well as to the Governing Board and to the Secretariat; and
- Acting as a mid-term conference and taking stock of the implementation of the decisions of the General Conference and recommending corrective measures.

The Governing Board: comprised of the President, the three Vice-Presidents and eleven (11) Vice-Chancellors elected from member institutions in the sub-regions. The Board meets once a year³; it appoints the Secretary-General and approves the appointment of other professional staff to the permanent Secretariat based in Accra, Ghana. It approves the annual programme and budget of the AAU, developed by the Secretariat in accordance with the Strategic Plan, and then assesses the outcomes of these activities.

Executive Committee: comprised of the AAU President, the three Vice-Presidents and the Secretary General, the Committee deals with any pressing issues that might arise between meetings of the Governing Board.⁴ Any decisions taken are brought to the Governing Board for ratification and then presented at the following General Conference.

The Secretariat: headed by the Secretary-General, who is appointed by the Governing Board, the Secretariat coordinates and implements the activities of the Association on a day-to-day basis and operationalizes the Strategic Plan. Among its roles, the Secretariat:

- Manages the administrative and financial affairs of the Association under the direction of the Secretary-General and the immediate authority of the Governing Board;

² COREVIP next meets in May-June 2011.

³ The Governing Board meets prior to COREVIP in May 2011.

⁴ The Executive Committee was created at the 12th General Conference held in 2009; it becomes one of the Standing Committees of the Governing Board.

- Manages member relations, including subscriptions and member services;
- Draws up a programme of activities to be undertaken by the Association on an annual basis as well as the Core Programme of Activities presented to the General Conference for execution over a four-year period, all in accordance with the Strategic Plan; and
- Secures the financial and human resources required to implement the above mentioned programmes.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The AAU's first Strategic Plan was developed and approved at the COREVIP held in Mauritius in 2003 and covered the period 2003-2010. The formulation of the current plan, the second since the Association was founded in 1967, provides an opportunity to assess the impact and consolidate the achievements of the initial Strategic Plan.

The purpose of the present Strategic Plan, covering the period 2011-2015, is to provide a framework that will assist AAU in achieving financial sustainability and in furthering its capacity to provide quality service to its members and the higher education community in Africa. This document will review the Strategic Planning Process, present an overview of the 2003-2010 Strategic Plan, and set out the Core Programme for the period 2009–2013, including on-going and new initiatives.

To set the stage for the formulation of strategic goals and objectives, an environmental scan is presented, which consists of an analysis of both the internal and external contexts. Three broad strategic directions are identified. A detailed schedule of strategic objectives, strategies and programmes has been drawn up and is attached as an appendix. Finally, questions related to implementation, monitoring and evaluation are discussed.

The Strategic Planning Process

The 2003-2010 AAU Strategic Plan had been initiated by the AAU Board, after which it was revised by the AAU Secretariat and submitted to the Board and then COREVIP for approval. Implementation of the plan was carried out through the Association's core programmes.

The process adopted for the new Strategic Plan can aptly be described as bottom-up and participatory. As the end date of the 2003-2010 plan approached, AAU management undertook a process for developing the next plan. A three-day residential retreat was held, with the assistance of an international resource person supported by a local resource person. A review of the out-going plan enabled the group to identify unfinished business and then brainstorm on the principal elements that would form a new Strategic Plan. All key staff of the AAU Secretariat, including the then Secretary-General, Prof. Goolam Mohamedbhai, attended the retreat, at the end of which an outline of the Strategic Plan had been developed.

A Steering Committee was constituted to continue work with the local resource person to develop a draft, which was later reviewed by the international resource person. The draft Strategic Plan was submitted to the AAU Governing Board in July 2010. The Governing Board formed its own committee to examine the draft.

An international consultant, nominated by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), worked with management and staff, including the current Secretary-General, Prof. Olugbemiro Jegede, to update the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 and revise it for submission to COREVIP in May 2011.

Overview of the 2003-2010 Strategic Plan

The first AAU Strategic Plan (2003-2010) was approved and adopted by the COREVIP in Mauritius in 2003. Its purpose was to lay the foundation for the Association to provide sustainable and effective support to its members in their role as knowledge generators for the continent's development.

Strategic Goals

The 2003-2010 plan sought to achieve three main goals:

- Effective support to African Higher Education Institutions in their core functions/mandates (teaching, research and service to their communities);
- Enhanced impact of the African higher education community and its institutions on national, regional and global policy dialogue; and
- Efficient management of the AAU, with sound programme implementation capacity and a secure resource base.

Strategic Objectives

The Strategic Goals were to be achieved through eight Strategic Objectives, namely:

- Promote and facilitate networking, collaboration and experience sharing in teaching, learning and research;
- Improve leadership, institutional management and the policy environment of African higher education;
- Empower AAU members to address developmental challenges and become an effective voice in national, continental and global bodies;
- Facilitate mutually beneficial interaction between member institutions and the external academic and other communities;
- Provide effective representation of the African higher education community in regional and international affairs;
- Improve the governance and organizational framework of the Association;
- Raise efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat; and

- Provide the Secretariat with a secure and adequate resource base for the pursuit of the Association's goals.

During a first phase, 2003-2004, the Association focused on strengthening the Secretariat and governance arrangements. The AAU Core Programme for 2005-2009 was approved by the General Conference in February 2005, and carried out with a view to achieving the strategic objectives set out above.⁵

The Core Programme of Activities 2009–2013

In a new cycle of programming, the General Conference adopted the current Core Programme (2009–2013) under the theme “Renewing and Networking African Higher Education Institutions to Meet Local and Regional Challenges.” This programme not only continues in the same directions as the previous Strategic Plan, but also builds on this momentum to address new challenges and adopt new strategies to be more fully articulated in the present Strategic Plan. The Core Programme 2009-2013 revolves around 4 sub-themes, with on-going and proposed new projects as follows:

Sub-Theme 1: Renewal and Strengthening of African Higher Education Institutions:

- Leadership and Management Development in Higher Education;
- Improving Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Research and Education Networks;
- Quality Assurance and Harmonization of African Higher Education;
- Promoting Internationalization of African Higher Education (*New*); and
- Strengthening University-Industry Linkages (*New*).

Sub-Theme 2: African Higher Education Institutions Responding to Local and Regional Challenges

- Coping with HIV and AIDS;
- Meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (*New*);
- Achieving Sustainable Development in Africa (*New*); and
- Meeting Education For All (EFA) Targets and Emphasizing Teacher Training (*New*).

Sub-Theme 3: Promoting Knowledge Generation, Dissemination and Application

- Database of African Theses and Dissertations;
- Academic Mobility (Staff and Student Exchange for Postgraduate Training and Research);
- Promoting Open and Distance Learning (*New*); and
- Research Management and Governance.

⁵ An analysis of the outputs of the completed core programme for 2005-2009 is presented as Appendix 1.

Sub-Theme 4: Miscellaneous and Special Issues

- Ford Foundation's International Fellowships Programme (IFP)
- Emerging Issues

In order to situate the above activities and more closely tie them to the strategic planning process, and, in addition, to more effectively chart the course for the future and prepare the next round of core activities, it is helpful to identify those objectives that pertain to the secretariat and the association itself, those that concern AAU at the service of its member institutions, and those with broader implications for higher education and its response to local and regional challenges in Africa. We shall proceed, therefore, with an environmental scan that looks at the different levels, and then set out the goals and objectives that best address the corresponding issues.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN: INTERNAL CONTEXT

Diversity of Higher Education and AAU Membership

The AAU is currently an association of largely public universities, although some of the increasing number of private universities have joined the Association, or are seeking membership. At present, only 262 (approximately one-third) of the nearly 800 university and non-university tertiary institutions in Africa are members. While the AAU does not necessarily need to be a club of all higher education institutions in Africa, or even all the fully-fledged universities, the growing number and diversity of higher education institutions in Africa offer the opportunity for the AAU to expand its membership, set the pace for accountability and quality assurance, and enhanced membership services.

An expanded membership, with a potential for increased subscription revenues, will contribute to financial sustainability, which forms part of the expectations of various stakeholders such as the Governing Board, funders, and governments, as shown in the Table 1 below. At the same time, there will be a corresponding need for greater accountability and enhanced member services. These efforts together, if successful, will usher in a new era of stakeholder relations, reinforcing the credibility of the AAU. Ultimately, all these factors combined will help to attract members, retain existing ones, and secure funding from the donor community, governments and the private sector.

Organization

The multi-level governance structure of the AAU has been described in detail in section 1, above. This comprises the General Conference, COREVIP, Governing Board and Executive Committee. The Secretary-General, who is the public spokesperson and advocate for the Association and is responsible for its day-to-day administration, heads the Secretariat, located in Accra, Ghana. The current organogram of the AAU is

depicted in Appendix 3. The Human Resource function is performed in the Office of the Secretary-General. The Secretariat has three main departments, namely:

Research and Programmes, headed by a Director who is responsible for drawing and implementing the Core Programme of Activities. The Core Programme of Activities is implemented on project-by-project basis using project officers and assistant project officers.

Communication & Services, the Head of which is responsible for ICT and services such as Publications and Information Resources (Library).

Finance, whose Head is responsible for the financial and accounting functions of the Association, with the support of accounts officers.

Table 1: Presentation of AAU Stakeholders and their Expectations

Stakeholder	Expectations
AAU staff	Competitive remuneration; Job security; Opportunities for growth and career progression.
AAU management	Good policy direction from Board; Attractive service conditions.
Member Institutions	Assistance in meeting their education goals; Support to development leadership and management capacity of staff; Support to build capacity in ICT, and research, including grant proposal writing.
Governing Board	Effective and efficient management; Financial viability.
COREVIP/General Conference	Effective and efficient implementation of Strategic Plan and core programmes approved by General Conference; Adoption of its recommendations by the Board and Secretariat.
Governments of Member Universities (including the Government of Ghana)	Operation in accordance with AAU's raison d'être; Fulfilment of statutory obligations; Financial self-sufficiency; Efficient and effective management capacity; Better service delivery to African HEIs; Promotion of increased collaboration and networking among universities across the continent; Promotion of better strategic planning in HEIs; Responsive and effective approaches to challenges of HEIs; Contribution to national development.

Donors/Funders	Accountability for facilities/grants provided; Adherence to contract terms; Sustainability.
Funding Partners/ Beneficiaries	Value for money; Efficient utilization of resources to achieve planned outcomes; Availability of products and services; Meeting delivery schedules and deadlines.
Students	Effective leadership and management of university institutions; Availability of assistance to students in the form of scholarships, grants, and awards; Involvement of students in AAU activities.
Faculty	Effective leadership and management of university institutions; Availability of assistance to faculty, such as fellowships, exchange programmes and other opportunities for capacity building.
Sister Organizations	Opportunities for support, collaboration and partnerships.
Wider community: parents/guardians, stakeholders	Employability of graduates; Generation of knowledge, literacy, skills for good citizenry; Applicability of research and knowledge transfer; Creation of prosperity.

SWOC Analysis

Over the past ten years, the AAU Secretariat has enjoyed success in implementing a number of projects in diverse areas. At the same time, it faces considerable constraints and challenges. The following section sets out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC) of the AAU Secretariat, the results of which provide a foundation on which to identify strategic goals, objectives and actions, and to build a robust Strategic Plan.

Strengths

- Competent, dedicated and experienced staff;
- Continuous training of staff;
- High level of team work;
- Functional governance structures;
- Good financial reporting systems;
- Proven track record of managing projects and activities, and delivering on time;
- Ability to mobilize stakeholders (HEIs, partners, policymakers) on topical issues.

Weaknesses

- Limited opportunities for staff for career progression or promotion;
- Policies and procedures not fully aligned with international standards or best practices;
- Limited financial resource base; insufficient stable and predictable funding sources;
- Insufficient resources within the secretariat to take on new projects and fully seize new opportunities.

Opportunities

- Emerging recognition by African governments and development partners of the role and importance of higher education in development;
- Support from host country, Government of Ghana, for AAU operations;
- Donor confidence;
- Emergence of sub-regional bodies, the majority of which are linked to AAU;
- Increasing public/private HEIs in Africa, with potential for membership in AAU;
- Interest by an expanding number of donors in providing support to AAU;
- Increased visibility of AAU and its programmes in and outside Africa;
- Emerging regional and national Research and Education Networks (RENs);
- Diverse and increased number of ICT tools.

Challenges

- Competition for funding in the context of shrinking resources;
- Retention of senior level staff;
- Limited external and independent monitoring and evaluation system;
- Provision of trilingual services in the official languages of AAU namely, English, French and Arabic;
- High cost internet bandwidth;
- Quality of ICT services from providers;
- Inadequate office space;
- Power supply outages affecting equipment and efficiency at the Secretariat.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN: EXTERNAL CONTEXT

The State of Higher Education in Africa

Recent attempts at the national and continental levels to re-energize and empower the African continent make this an opportune time for reflecting on new directions for policy and practice in African higher education. African higher education institutions vary considerably according to their location in countries where Arabic, English, French or Portuguese are the official lingua franca. There are also significant cultural, religious, social, political and economic differences from one country to another, affecting the

orientation and situation of HEIs. In addition to this diversity, and with some notable exceptions, higher education in Africa has been further affected by the following factors:

- Economic and social problems, such as global economic crises, disease and poverty;
- A small number of universities per country;
- Comparatively low enrolment at all levels, despite an enrolment explosion in the last 20 years that has stretched institutional facilities and capacities to almost the breaking point, and despite a small but increasing number of private universities and other higher education providers within and outside Africa;
- Low tertiary education expenditure per person, although very high relative to per capita gross national product (GNP);
- Insufficient economic, political and logistical support for higher education from African Governments and corporations; weak private sector support and an undeveloped culture of private contributions to universities;
- Donor fatigue among funding partners, and competition for scarce resources from other organizations/causes;
- High expectations and demands from key stakeholders, not matched by commensurate resource support;
- Low funding for research, especially research for development; weak research capacity of African HEIs;
- Underdeveloped linkages among universities, national innovation systems – where they exist – industry and governments, and the social and productive sectors of the economy;
- Inadequate infrastructure, and security risks, especially in relation to ICT, and consequent weak links among African HEIs, on the one hand, and with the global knowledge system, on the other; and
- Human capacity issues: ageing faculty, limited incentives available to attract younger staff and stem the “brain drain.”

Global Trends

The rise of the “knowledge society,” the increase in the volume and pace of cross-border transactions, the explosion of new information and communication technologies, and the rapid growth and mobility of populations, especially skilled human resources, are altering conditions and expectations of higher education systems throughout the world. The most visible symbols and facilitators of globalization have been the rapid development of ICT and the creation of planetary networks of knowledge generation and dissemination. While knowledge creation and management have become easier with increased application of ICT, the digital divide and the gap between Africa and the industrialized countries in relation to research and development (R&D) activity continues to grow. Disparities are even wider in relation to the transfer of knowledge to industry and society. Consequently, while knowledge-based societies are taking hold in other regions of the world, most of Africa continues to lag behind.

Technological Challenges

Some higher education institutions, especially in the North and in South Africa, have made progress in adopting ICT to improve learning outcomes. In general, however, the continent is lagging behind in the global information and technology revolution. Beyond the deficiencies in national ICT provision and policy, higher education institutions that should be at the forefront of Africa's participation in the ICT revolution are, in most instances, ill-prepared and ill-equipped to play such leadership roles because of the inadequate development of their own information infrastructure. On a positive note, global trends in the application of ICT offer opportunities for transforming the several interconnected functions of universities in Africa. Currently, higher education institutions in Africa are at different levels of ICT development and require different ICT development strategies. Identifying these different levels and their respective characteristics is a necessary step in establishing appropriate ICT strategies across the continent.

Political Challenges

The political climate within which higher education institutions operate in Africa remains a major challenge. Conflicts and wars have bred uncertainty, accelerated the brain drain and disrupted academic work. The continued existence of repressive regimes in many countries of Africa, the restriction of freedom of expression, along with extensive political corruption, personal rule and non-accountability, all work against the generation, acquisition and application of information and knowledge and constrain socio-economic development.

At the same time, a burgeoning process of democratization in a number of African countries has created an environment more conducive to debate, the plurality of ideas and innovative research. This has drawn attention to the need for greater self-reliance of African higher education institutions, as well as cooperation among them, in such areas as training and research, academic and student exchanges and harmonized reforms of curricula.

Social and Economic Challenges

Africa's growing birth rate means continued expansion in Africa's youth population. The demand for increased access to higher education is expected to continue to mount, therefore, whereas state funding for human and material resources will likely continue to be limited.

Furthermore, the dangers of liberalization are considerable given the level of development of the African higher education system relative to that of industrialized countries. The potential exists for liberalization to derail the revitalisation of HEIs process currently under way in Africa. Also there is a strong African resentment to treating education in the same way as trade in goods and services in view of the impact that trade liberalization has had on poor people over the two decades.

Responding effectively to the privatization and commercialization of higher education, as well as the proliferation of open and distance learning opportunities, involves innovations not only in course provision to ensure relevancy, but also in revenue generation, quality assurance, institutional governance, and human resource management. At the same time, higher education institutions in Africa today must address a whole range of other issues, which include better access for certain groups such as women and the poor, environmental degradation and climate change adaptation, research methodology, the brain drain, and the threat posed by HIV/AIDS.

5. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2011-2015

Having examined the situation of the AAU, including its relations with internal and external stakeholders, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, and having then set out some of the features and issues that characterize the state of higher education and its context in Africa, the stage has been set for defining the strategic directions and key objectives of AAU over the coming years.

The strategic directions established for AAU for the period extending from 2011-2015 will help to guide policies and actions and thereby enable the AAU to achieve not only financial sustainability but also growth. AAU will hence be in a better position to serve its member institutions and university stakeholders, and also to advocate for higher education in Africa generally.

The main strategic focus during the plan period will be to build the capacity of the Secretariat and member institutions to facilitate the provision of quality higher education and open access to the increasing population of young people on the continent. AAU will also develop strong collaborative relationships with development partners, regional and sub-regional bodies, student associations and university communities within and outside Africa. A new emphasis on stakeholder relations and university-industry linkages, more specifically, has the potential to meet the educational and development needs across the continent.

The fundamental question is: how can AAU best fulfil its mandate of providing relevant and high quality services to its members through a range of projects, products and services, in order to have a positive impact on the higher education landscape and, over the longer term, to effect positive change and address societal needs and development challenges more broadly? In order to truly achieve its vision – to be the advocate for higher education in Africa, with the capacity to assist its member organizations in meeting national and continental needs – AAU will address its internal issues, strengthen relations with its stakeholders, including member institutions, and then enrich the range, scope and impact of its activities.

The goals of AAU emanating therefrom fall into three broad categories as follows:

1. Organizational matters specific to AAU;
2. Capacity to assist and serve member institutions; and
3. Capacity to meet more broad societal needs.

A logical framework, or “Logframe Matrix,” has been developed and is attached as Appendix 2. It sets out seven Key Result Areas (KRAs). For each of these KRAs, objectives, strategies, programmes/projects/initiatives, output targets and current or potential implementing partners are indicated.

The first two KRAs, “Strengthening Capacity for Service Delivery at the AAU Secretariat” and “AAU Membership Size, Quality and Commitment,” address issues related to the first strategic direction, the organization itself, and will reinforce AAU’s ability to fulfil its mission and achieve its broader goals. The following three KRAs, “Strengthening HEIs’ Delivery Capacity in Africa,” “Knowledge Generation, Management and Dissemination” and “Community and Student Engagement in HEIs,” present strategies for assisting member institutions to enhance capacity, infrastructure and the quality of education and research. Finally, the KRAs entitled “Engagement with African and International Partners in Development for Improved Collaboration” and “Supporting HEIs’ Response to Local and Regional Challenges,” pave the way for the higher education community to participate in efforts to address some of Africa’s most pressing needs, for example, through enhanced capacity to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

Building Capacity of Staff

AAU Management will continue to build and strengthen the capacity of staff in project management and other essential skills in order to ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan. In addition, key personnel will be recruited and trained in the areas where staffing levels are currently low.

Introducing Incentives for Staff

AAU Management will explore performance-based compensation, such as bonuses and extra allowances, as a means to encouraging the achievement of results.

Modified Organogram

The AAU’s organogram has been modified so as to be appropriate for implementation of the Strategic Plan; it is attached as Appendix 3.

Programmes/Projects/Initiatives

The largest proportion of AAU's activities will be carried out through programmes/projects/initiatives, using project coordinators, officers and staff. Project plans with performance indicators will be developed to guide implementation and assessment of results.

Devolution of Roles to Members/Strategic Partners/Networks

As much as possible, AAU Management will continue to involve member institutions as well as strategic partners and networks in implementing the programmes/projects/initiatives. The aim is to engender commitment and ownership, and thereby achieve efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation process. In this way, the AAU will also be helping to build capacity for programme/project delivery in member institutions.

Departmental Action Plans

Under the direction of Heads of Departments at the Secretariat, departmental action plans will be formulated in accordance with the Strategic Plan Logframe Matrix in Appendix 2. These will be prepared upon approval of the AAU Strategic Plan by COREVIP.

Risk Management Strategy

Given the ambitious nature of the proposed work plan, in terms of the volume of projects as well as the number of targets and outputs, the AAU anticipates potential risks. The risks and proposed measures to manage them are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Identification and Mitigation Strategies of Potential Risks

No.	Potential Risk	Mitigating Strategy
1	Non-fulfilment of donor pledges	AAU Management will liaise closely with donors and partner institutions to ensure a collaborative working relationship and goodwill.
2	Inefficiency in project implementation	AAU Management will continue to build the capacity of all project staff to be able to implement their projects efficiently and effectively. Proposal writing and project management skills are key areas of priority.
3	Delays in reporting and meeting deadlines	Every effort will be made to continuously sensitize project coordinators and officers to the need for timely submission of reports and meeting deadlines. Bottlenecks in project implementation will be addressed.
4	Non compliance with project and grant agreements	Implementation of project agreements will be monitored from the office of the Director of Research and Programmes to ensure compliance with terms and

No.	Potential Risk	Mitigating Strategy
		conditions of agreements/contracts. This will also inspire donor/partner confidence in the Association.
5	Ineffective Financial Management System	Financial management will be strengthened by the periodic reviewing of the system in use so as to ensure efficient generation of financial reports as well as prudent use of funds for intended purpose and accountability.
6	Inadequacies in record-keeping	A Management Information System (MIS) will be used to implement the Strategic Plan, ensuring proper record-keeping on both projects and routine operations.
7	Lack of cooperation from stakeholders	AAU Management will make stakeholder management a key factor in achieving efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Financing Strategy

Once the plan is approved, a detailed five-year budget will be prepared at the Secretariat. It is expected that incremental funding will be required to carry out the Strategic Plan. This will be secured through the following strategies:

- **Fundraising**

This will include an appeal for funds and donations from sub-regional, regional and international bodies as well as governments and the African Union.

- **Development of Funding Proposals**

One of the most potent and traditional means of generating funds is through funding proposals to funding agencies including governments and philanthropic organizations. Over the years, AAU has gained a lot of funding proposal writing experience and will continue these successful efforts with a view to reducing over-dependency on only a few funding sources.

- **In-kind Donations**

Donations in-kind will be explored with both traditional and new donors.

- **Member Subscriptions**

Part of the funding of the Strategic Plan will be sourced from membership subscriptions. Every effort will be made to increase the visibility of the AAU through innovative marketing techniques.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- **Measuring success**

During the first year, baseline data in a number of areas will be collected to substantiate some of the observations made in the Environmental Scan section and elsewhere in the Strategic Plan. For areas that are targeted for intervention, some thought will be given as to what “success” would look like at the end of the strategic planning period and what are the most appropriate metrics for assessing whether the actions have been successful.

- **Performance Indicators**

Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound output targets will be developed in order to assess the extent to which the objectives have been attained during the plan period.

- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting**

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be monitored periodically at the corporate and departmental levels. Feedback will allow appropriate actions to be taken to ensure compliance and achievement of the desired results. This will include systematic documentation, analysis and reporting of performance in key result areas.

In order to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation, a Management Information System (MIS) will be developed at corporate, departmental and project levels to facilitate data capturing, processing, storage and retrieval. This will guide management decision-making and will allow for adjustment of strategies as the plan unfolds.

The performance indicators formulated for each key result area will be incorporated into the data contained in the management information system.

Annual reviews of the Strategic Plan will be conducted to assess the attainment of annual targets. The focus of the annual review will be on the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes/activities, the outputs generated and resulting outcomes/impacts. A mid-term review will be undertaken in 2013 to assess progress made thus far and make changes if necessary. This would be presented at the 2013 General Conference of the Association.

A comprehensive end-of-plan review or terminal evaluation will be conducted towards the end of 2015. A detailed report will be prepared to cover all aspects of plan implementation, successes and constraints as well as lessons learnt.