

ACE II Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence Project



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Uganda launches four Higher Education Africa Centers of Excellence



Kampala (November 15, 2017) - Uganda's four Higher Education Africa Centers of Excellence have been launched by the minister of Education and Sports, Hon. Janet Kataha Museveni. The four centers are part of the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE II) Project, an initiative of participating African governments and the World Bank.

In total there are 24 Africa Centers of Excellence (ACEs) spread in the eight countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The project's objective is to strengthen the selected ACEs to deliver quality post-graduate education and build collaborative research capacity in the regional priority areas of Industry, Agriculture, Health, Education and Applied Statistics. These priority areas were defined by the project's Regional Steering Committee after broad consultations in the region.

Hon. Janet Museveni said she was happy to see universities embark on projects that address real life challenges. "Universities were not meant to be unreachable, talking to themselves, but to lead communities to find their own solutions," she said. "It is a liberating day for my spirit to see our universities talk about projects that are addressing issues that deal with our everyday life."

She added, "This intervention in higher education worth \$24 million, which is approximately Shs 87 billion is indeed a worthy investment and as a country we salute the partnership of the World Bank."

An open, transparent, and merit-based competitive process was employed in the selection of the 24 centers. Out of the 19 proposals submitted by Higher Institutions in Uganda, only four Centers were selected. The Centers are

regional and expected to address specific development challenges. This will be achieved through graduate training in Master's, PhD, and short-term courses and applied research in form of partnerships and collaborations with other institutions and with the private sector.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports, Mr. Alex Kakooza, pledged to ensure that the project achieves its objectives and becomes a model for others.

Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), an institution of the East African Community responsible for coordinating higher education and research in the Community is the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) for the project. IUCEA will also supervise a competitive scholarship program in which over 60 regional students in STEM will be financed for two years to attain a Master's degree in any of the ACEs. A World Bank grant of US\$8 is financing the RFU activities.

Speaking at the launch, the Deputy Executive Secretary, Prof. Mike Kuria, called on the Vice Chancellors to spread the goodness from the Centers of Excellence to all programs within the universities "The centers of excellence must not become islands of excellence in a sea of mediocrity. The Centers should become pacesetters for other programs, departments, schools and institutes," he said. "Excellence must not be limited only to the sciences, but must be applicable to the arts, humanities and social sciences. We need every one of us to be excellent in what we do for the good of our region."

Makerere University is hosting two ACEs. The Center of Materials, Product Development & Nanotechnology (MAPRONANO) will strengthen research and training in materials science and engineering, nanotechnology and nanomedicine in order to develop human resource capacity in applied science engineering disciplines. Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) hosted at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) will focus on delivery of better crop varieties. The third Center is at Mbarara University of Science and Technology. Pharm-Biotechnology & Traditional Medicine Centre (PHARMBIOTRAC) will train and raise a critical mass of specialized and skilled human capital that can use multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach to advance traditional medicine and pharmaceutical biotechnology. The fourth Center is hosted at Uganda Martyrs University. African Center of Excellence in Agroecology and Livelihood Systems (ACALISE) will provide training, research and community engagement for development in Agroecology, food systems, value chains and sustainable livelihoods for balanced development in the region.

The \$140 million project is financed by the World Bank in form of credit to the eight participating countries. The project will close in December 2022.

Phase One of this initiative (ACE I) is ongoing in West and Central Africa and it started in 2013 with 22 Centers of Excellence in eight countries.

For more information on ACE I and ACE II, visit the project websites <https://ace.aau.org/> and <http://www.ace2.iucea.org/>



Call for Applications for MSc and PhD programmes at Mbarara University of Science & Technology

1 August 2017

The Africa Center of Excellence for Pharm-Biotechnology and Traditional Medicine (PHARMBIOTRAC) is based at the Mbarara University of Science & Technology (MUST), a public university based in western Uganda and about 260km from the capital city,