



Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report African Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP)



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Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report African Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP)¹

¹ The ACP Group consists of 79 Member-States, all of them, save Cuba, signatories to the Cotonou Agreement which binds them to the European Union: 48 countries from Sub-Saharan Africa, 16 from the Caribbean and 15 from the Pacific.

The following countries belong to ACP: Angola - Antigua and Barbuda - Belize - Cape Verde - Comoros - Bahamas - Barbados - Benin - Botswana - Burkina Faso - Burundi - Cameroon - Central African Republic - Chad - Congo (Brazzaville) - Congo (Kinshasa) - Cook Islands - Cote d'Ivoire - Cuba* - Djibouti - Dominica - Dominican Republic - Eritrea - Ethiopia - Fiji - Gabon - Gambia - Ghana - Grenada - Republic of Guinea - Guinea-Bissau - Equatorial Guinea - Guyana - Haiti - Jamaica - Kenya - Kiribati - Lesotho - Liberia - Madagascar - Malawi - Mali - Marshall Islands - Mauritania - Mauritius - Micronesia - Mozambique - Namibia - Nauru - Niger - Nigeria - Niue - Palau - Papua New Guinea - Rwanda - St. Kitts and Nevis - St. Lucia - St. Vincent and the Grenadines - Solomon Islands - Samoa - Sao Tome and Principe - Senegal - Seychelles - Sierra Leone - Somalia - South Africa - Sudan - Suriname - Swaziland - Tanzania - Timor-Leste - Togo - Tonga - Trinidad and Tobago - Tuvalu - Uganda - Vanuatu - Zambia - Zimbabwe.

* Cuba is financed by DCI (Development Cooperation Instrument) whereas the other ACP countries are financed by the EDF (European Development Fund).



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1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the first nine interim reports of the second generation of the CBHE projects selected for funding in 2016, which was when the programme opened for first time to the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Region.

Among the nine projects in the Region 13 universities from Sub-Saharan countries are involved as partners². There were no funded projects involving Caribbean and Pacific countries in this project generation. Therefore, the report highlights only the situation of Sub-Saharan Africa and does not reflect the challenges of the Caribbean and Pacific Region although some of the challenges may be in common.

The report's results are therefore based on a very small sample of on-going CBHE projects³ and are to be considered as preliminary and to be reviewed at a later stage.

The report is analysing the role of the CBHE action as regards **the impact and sustainability of the funded projects** together with their **inclusiveness** (participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers). More specifically, the report will look into the institutional development of higher education institutions (HEIs), their modernisation of study programmes, teaching and learning methodologies, structural reforms and the strengthening of HEIs' technical capacities. It will then focus on the **opportunities created for individuals** (students, academic and administrative staff) and third parties like enterprises, chambers of commerce, etc.

The report will also examine how the EU projects have influenced **national policy developments in the education sector**, mainly but not exclusively through 'Structural Projects'. Special attention is given to the strengthening of **regional cooperation** through CBHE projects that include two or more countries from the same Region.

Finally, the analyses will be used to identify **challenges** and provide a **set of recommendations** for future reference.

² List of 13 countries involved in selected projects: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda.

³ There are about 700 active projects following five annual calls, starting from 2015.

2. INTRODUCTION

The CBHE action of the Erasmus+ Programme supports the modernisation and development of HEIs and the educational systems in the Partner Countries. Capacity Building projects are expected to have a long-term structural impact and their direct influence is on institutions and educational systems rather than on individuals.

European HEIs have a key role to play in supporting the modernisation efforts of emerging and developing parts of the world. By developing Partner Country education systems, they contribute to the sustainable development of these countries' economies and societies as a whole. In this way, European HEIs are given the opportunity to address significant challenges at the national, regional or even global level (e.g. climate change). In this context, the involvement of national authorities (Ministries of Education) plays a critical role.

International consortia of HEIs (which often include private businesses) strengthen the quality of Higher Education in the Partner Countries by providing students with new and upgraded skills needed in the labour market. They also introduce innovative approaches in teaching and learning and provide entrepreneurial skills.

The CBHE action is implemented through two types of projects, which aim to have an impact on HEIs or on the educational system as a whole. While '**Joint Projects**' aim at the development of HEIs (e.g. curriculum development, governance of institutions, etc.), '**Structural Projects**' address important challenges for the educational systems of the Partner Countries (accreditation, quality assurance in Education, PhD education, etc.).

Both project types address one of the following **three pillars**

1. Curricula Reform
2. Modernising university governance and management
3. Strengthening of relations between HEIs and the wider economic and social environment

based on pre-established regional priorities.



3. CBHE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Higher education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa is facing a number of challenges. Growing levels of student enrolment throughout the Region are straining the limited resources of public universities. At the same time, the number of private institutions has increased rapidly. This development needs to be matched by investments in physical and technological infrastructure while simultaneously guaranteeing a high teaching standard. This must also be accompanied by an improvement in access, equity, and affordability, especially for marginalized communities and women.

Despite the relative increase in enrolment in higher education and efforts carried out by institutions, international organisations and countries to support mobility of students and staff, the rate of mobility, within, from and to the Region, remains comparatively low.

The poor performance of the labour market is reflected in very low employment rates and high levels of unemployment, leading to a brain drain among graduates and a lack of regional university cooperation.

The CBHE action targets the above-mentioned challenges through the implementation of international cooperation projects. The results accomplished have affected the modernisation and reform of higher education in the region. HEIs and individuals (staff and students) have benefited from institutional and study programme reforms by using and mainstreaming results of CBHE projects, primarily related to creating new curricula, modernisation of university structures and updating educational processes. In some cases, the CBHE project outputs also triggered changes at a national level through directly or indirectly influencing the structure and legislative framework of higher education.

The CBHE action applies both a bottom-up and a top-down strategy to align national decision making with priorities of university development and internationalisation (fostering the Bologna process and tools). However, effective impact on the normative, and hence structural level, often remains disconnected from legislative and administrative reforms. Attainments directly traceable to CBHE projects are visible mainly in curriculum development – creating new student-centred study programmes at bachelor and master level – and their national accreditation.

The achievements obtained through CBHE projects, in particular the introduction of quality assurance procedures and new and updated degree programmes, have provided students in the Region with possibilities that could not have been realised without the input of the European partner institutions. Tangible results become highly visible through the establishment/improvement of laboratories, library systems and other student-oriented structures and services at university level. This has had an effect on the educational excellence and distinction of the participating HEIs in the Partner Countries and hence the quality of training offered to their students.



The support of the management of HEIs and of national authorities is pivotal in this context and vital for the sustainability of the achieved project results. The CBHE action has considerably enhanced the capacities of universities in the Region to manage international cooperation projects.

Thanks to CBHE projects with European partners, **bridges** have been built for **intra-national, regional or cross-regional** cooperation that otherwise are unlikely to have occurred due to the national/regional/cultural and sometimes academic disconnection at play.

3.1. Institutional Development

3.1.1. Curricula Reform

One of the main objectives of the CBHE action is curricula reform. Partner Country HEIs work together in high quality international consortia to revise study programmes or to develop new ones, to engage in new learning and teaching methods and to prepare students with new and better skills for a changing job market and a developing economy.

- ▶ Almost 50% of all CBHE projects in the Region selected for funding deal with curriculum reform. In addition, other projects in the field of modernising of governance or strengthening links with society often include elements of curricula development.

The modernisation and launching of new study programmes and the introduction of innovative learning and teaching methods has significantly changed the landscape of the university sector. Curricula reform projects have been highly sustainable, since all newly created study programmes at graduate and postgraduate level have become an integral part of regular degree programs taught at the HEIs:

Quality of Higher education for Renewable Energies in North and East- Africa (AFREQEN) (573852-EPP-1-2016-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The project is designed to develop 11 master and doctorate level training modules and a master degree in renewable energy, and more specifically in a new discipline of environmental metrology. The partnership is large, including 24 partners representing Partner Country institutions from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia.

For many Partner Country HEIs, the collaboration with European universities on curricula development has implied exposure to the Bologna Process methodology even though this process does not directly concern the Region. Hence, when developing new curricula and considering student mobility opportunities, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was introduced and the student-centred learning approaches and outcomes. Many HEIs have embraced the Bologna Process as a means of supporting mobility with European HEIs. In some countries, nationwide working groups have been created to promote the use of the Bologna Process methodology.

It is worth pointing out that there are two contradicting views in motion regarding the arrival of the Bologna Process in Africa: as a significant reform model opportunity and as a return to a form of 'colonialism'. Also, due to internal and external factors, the extension and impact of the Bologna Process in African higher education are limited. Consequently, Africa has its initiative called Harmonisation, quality and Accreditation (HAQAA), which supports a Pan-qAfrican Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF). This is done by developing continent standards

and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education, capacity building in the regional and national bodies in charge of the higher education and by cultivating expertise in the field of institutional evaluation and quality.

Specific remarks

Not all study programmes started during the CBHE project's implementation period or immediately after project completion. This is because of the long time required for study programme accreditation and the reform of the education system. Therefore, some study programmes could only be launched after the end of the project's eligibility period. Furthermore, curricula development projects often **lack guidelines for students and a proper information policy about the new possibilities**, which is a deficiency for this type of project. In general, the **involvement of students** as end beneficiaries is not sufficiently considered. In most cases, student involvement in curriculum development takes place only at end for the purposes of individual testing. While there are many active student associations, these are not normally involved in project consortia, which is certainly detrimental to the purpose of the CBHE projects.

3.1.2. Technological Upgrade

The provision of funds to improve the technical structure of Partner Country HEIs is an important element of CBHE and the provision of **equipment** plays an important role (often almost one third of the total grant). This is an attractive offer to universities, which often lack modern and labour market oriented training facilities.

Adequate provision of equipment in laboratories and centres is vital for supporting practical coursework, especially in the natural and hard sciences. Provision of equipment allows the establishment of facilities like career advice centres, innovation and start-up centres. New facilities are frequently used to train private or public employees, who otherwise would not have access to such important support structures. Sometimes this even happens on a fee-paying basis, thus contributing to the project's impact and financial sustainability.

CBHE projects also strengthen the digitalisation of education by using various IT tools in the teaching process and by creating online learning platforms.

The strengthening of HEI technical capacities by opening new laboratories for teaching is an obvious goal for CBHE projects. Additionally these labs are often used to conduct research and create hence a vital bridge between teaching and research.

Water Resources and Environmental Risks in African Cities (MAREMA) (573754-EPP-1-2016-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project bought laboratory equipment and computers for the use of students of the Partner Country universities in Benin, Ivory Coast and Cameroon, with view to enable them to participate in the Master courses developed within the project.

Creation of Master Degree in Energy, Water and Housing Environment in Madagascar (MADEEHI) (573764-EPP-1-2016-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project has established and equipped the Open Physical Laboratories (Fablabs) with equipment to be used for studies in the fields of energy, water, housing, environment and anthropology as well as workbenches for the students to forge their skills in practice.

Specific remarks

Given the importance of being able to buy project specific equipment, the equipment purchased is revised after the start of the project to adapt to the needs of the institutions and to the implementation of a specific type of curricula. By doing this, it is possible to avoid situations in which equipment is used for general purposes, for example in the provision of laptops to students and teachers. Such purchases are not always required for the implementation of the CBHE project and it is also not sure if this kind of equipment remains with the universities after the projects' end. However, this practice is further delaying the purchase equipment.

In certain cases, the required equipment maintenance and follow-up financing is not ensured. Sometimes the reason for this is the lack of financial autonomy of universities.

Moreover, many HEIs reported challenges in the handling of the tendering procedures when equipment was not available in their country but had to be imported. Since different tendering rules had to be followed, the universities faced a multilayer bureaucracy. It also happens occasionally that these administrative hurdles are exacerbated due to fluctuating exchange rates.

3.1.3. Governance and Management Reform

The universities' governance/management bodies in the Region still require institutional reinforcement to be able to compete with European and worldwide universities. HEIs in the Partner Countries need to improve the efficiency of their governance processes and their structures to have them grow internationally and offer study programmes of high quality, which attract the interest of academics, students and society at large. This implies among other things, sustainable strategies and regulations, efficient international relation offices, quality assurance units endorsing international and European standards, financial autonomy, structures for collaborating with the labour market and strong alumni associations.

CBHE projects have clearly contributed to the creation or reinforcement of university bodies and changes at institutional level:

Strengthening of Collaboration, Leadership and Professionalization in Research Management in SADC and EU Higher Education Institutions (STORM) (574169-EPP-1-2016-1-ZA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The STORM project's objective is to establish and improve research quality, research management and increase the number of the postgraduate students. This project supports the research structures and research management offices in higher education institutions in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa.

However, much remains to be done in the area of governance and management reform for the ACP HEIs. New CBHE projects should support the efficiency of the structures in place (e.g. approaches to involve stakeholders in governance, especially employers and alumni), digitised procedures, optimised processes, and mechanisms to trace the employability of the graduates, etc.

3.1.4. HEI International strategies

The internationalisation of higher education in the ACP Region is high on the political agenda of governments and HEIs. However, while in Europe internationalisation is considered as a vehicle for enhancing the competitiveness of HEIs and economies, in the ACP Region it is seen primarily as a means of supporting national reforms and institutional capacity building. The higher education systems in the region cannot compete with the more established and highly internationalised educational systems in Europe and elsewhere. However, internationalisation offers a chance to improve and develop through cooperation with strong European partner institutions.

Individual academics remain the most important driver of international cooperation in the Region. It is through bottom-up initiatives by academics that short-term mobility, research cooperation, development of joint-study programmes, and other activities are being developed. While there is a high level of commitment to internationalisation almost everywhere, these academics often do not receive sufficient support to enact their cooperative ventures. University practices and support services are not sufficiently adapted to serve this goal. Internationalisation efforts are hampered by certain shortcomings throughout the Region, such as weak international relations offices (IROs), an insufficient number of courses offered in foreign languages, relatively poor foreign language skills among students and academics in some countries, and weak support for finding and managing research funding. However, the extent of these shortcomings varies significantly across the countries.

Numerous strategic and procedural documents have been created and adopted which aim to support internationalisation and modernisation at the institutional level. These include guidelines for learning outcomes at HEIs, strategies for university internationalisation, systems for monitoring the quality of the education process, and newly adopted protocols and procedures, which help improve the service provided by the international relations offices.

Moreover, the CBHE projects have **increased the visibility** of the HEIs involved, through their strong outward orientation and focus on international cooperation. This change significantly improves the support provided to students and staff interested in mobility at the university/faculty level

Via the CBHE projects, African HEIs have also managed to undertake activities relating to the third mission (i.e. societal outreach) of higher education. They have in some cases established cooperation with the non-academic sector, which increases the impact of the projects:

Social Inclusion and Energy Management for Informal Urban Settlements (SES) (573046-EPP-1-2016-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project will create open educational resources in lifelong learning (LLL) in Ethiopia. In particular, it targets professional architects, planners and engineers as well as local communities, national housing authorities and NGOs involved in the urbanization and inclusive housing.

Additionally, CBHE projects have supported the institutions to adopt a more multidisciplinary approach to curricula development in line with the Bologna principles.

Lastly, the participation of the Partner Country institutions in CBHE projects has strengthened the **integrative function of most public universities** vis-à-vis the faculties that are their constitutive elements in relation to international cooperation.

The performance of HEIs is often measured on the basis of their research output and quality. Opening HEIs up to global standards and benchmarks has motivated them to work to continuously improve their systems and processes:

Governance and the Social Challenges of African Universities: The Case of Food Safety and Security (DAFRALI) (573791-EPP-1-2016-1-BE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project is designed to improve governance of universities in Morocco, Congo and Senegal. The project has evaluated HEI strategies and autonomy, established links between societal challenges with the goal of creating improved strategies and multiannual action plans for HEIs in the field of food safety and food security.

3.2. Broadening Horizons for Individuals

3.2.1. Academic staff

The CBHE action has given professors from Partner Countries the opportunity to meet their peers in different countries. By working together in international consortia, professors have become aware of different perspectives, gained new insights into their academic field and have been exposed to international quality standards in education. The CBHE projects have allowed them to collaborate with other experts in their area, leading to a direct peer-to-peer knowledge transfer from Europe to the Partner Countries. They have also gained valuable work experience through the teaching of students in a different country and from different countries (sometimes in a foreign language).

CAPacity Building in Sustainability and Environmental Management (CAPsem) (574218-EPP-1-2016-1-NO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

In the framework of this project, around 30 members of Staff, 10 Students and 2 members of administrative staff from Uganda, India, and Nepal had the opportunity to carry out staff and student exchanges focusing on a methodology involving curriculum development, industry and stakeholder training and engagement with EU and other Partner Country higher education systems. The contacts built have proven extremely useful for pursuing further research. Contacts made have led to further collaborations and activities after the end of the project. This has improved the long-term impact of the projects' outcomes.

Two different categories of academics can be distinguished, namely a) experienced academics and b) young academics at the start of their career:

a) These academics were advanced in their career, but limited as regards further vertical growth at their home universities. By bringing an international dimension to their work, CBHE projects have

offered these staff members a new lease of life allowing them to broaden their perspectives. However, for the same reason this also means that often, it is a field's leading academics that are participating in the CBHE projects. Thus, monopolisation within the HEIs may occur. Access to EU projects is regarded as 'territorial gain' and not necessarily as something to be shared. This also holds true for Programme Country staff members for the same reasons and is leading to these 'peer group' networks risking the production of mediocre project outcomes. It should also be outlined that the motivation to be part of a CBHE project is not always only connected to the project's content or cooperation aspects but also to the **generous funding** that the CBHE project offers for personnel costs of professors. The additional remuneration is covering tasks that should be part of the normal tasks of the academics, namely the updating of their degree programmes in the case of curriculum development projects.

This goes hand in hand with the **one size fits all programme structure** of the CBHE action that makes it possible for academics and universities to include a huge variety of project ideas in their applications. Academics and 'professional project writers' sell/recycle project ideas that do not always correspond to the real needs of the HEI in the region and the CBHE action suffers from a high number of recurrent beneficiaries.

- b) Young academics are given the possibility to occupy leadership roles for project packages and are exposed to an international working level. They get access to EU funding which prevents a further brain drain.

Strengthening of Collaboration, Leadership and Professionalization in Research Management in SADC and EU Higher Education Institutions (STORM) (574169-EPP-1-2016-1-ZA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project has opted for the appointment of a shadow external advisory board for quality assurance. This is an innovative way of holding the consortium accountable to young research management staff, who will be asked to critically appraise the project's outcomes and its relevance for their career development. This approach aims to build the capacity of junior staff members in monitoring and evaluating international projects.

In general, trainings and workshops organised within the CBHE projects allowed academics to acquire new skills and knowledge in various disciplines.

Social Inclusion and Energy Management for Informal Urban Settlements (SES) (573046-EPP-1-2016-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Through seminars and thematic trainings the Ethiopian students and staff profited during their mobilities in Europe from insights into different European housing policies, sustainable energy management projects and neighbourhood interventions. Some of these aspects may be transferable to specific Ethiopian contexts. Local in-house trainings, developed in cooperation with European and Ethiopian partners, were also offered for practitioners, i.e. professional architects, planners and engineers as well as local communities, national housing authorities and NGOs.

The CBHE action allowed academics to overcome national boundaries and to link with other disciplines within their HEI. EU countries have been experimenting with multidisciplinary courses for some time and most academics recognise the benefits. Therefore, this concept has also been introduced in certain Partner Countries and has helped to promote innovation and cooperation between departments, and broaden academic and institutional ways of thinking.

Working with the **private sector** within a CBHE project has been a new experience for many professors. They have gained greater insights into business realities that could lead to making study programmes more relevant to business needs:

Creation of Master Degree in Energy, Water and Housing Environment in Madagascar (MADEEHI) (573764-EPP-1-2016-1-FR-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project had a strong involvement of companies during the project. They have been involved in the definition and validation of the training carried out during the project, identification of the educational materials acquired, and participation at the technological showroom in terms of dissemination of the project.

Furthermore, CBHE projects have opened the door for academics to **university management**. This was observed especially during the Agency's monitoring visits, which took place in the presence of the university management. It turned out that professors working on CBHE projects in different departments were often not aware that other colleagues in their HEI were also working on CBHE projects. Hence, it was through the Agency's monitoring visit that a connection between different CBHE projects was established. For the same reason it also became clear that some HEI managers were unaware of the activities taking place on the ground, which shows that **proper monitoring is missing** and the idea of 'internationalisation' as a strategy is often not yet cemented.

The CBHE action has given staff from the Region the opportunity to **develop their intercultural**

Many stakeholders complain about the lack of job-readiness of higher education graduates in the region, while others report graduates' lack of interactive skills, IT skills, organisational skills, and ability to work in teams. HEIs are seen as focusing on theoretical knowledge to the detriment of providing graduates with practical knowledge and experience, which is a key concern of employers. In addition, the curricula of many study programmes fail to reflect the combination of skills that employers seek.

skills by working together with colleagues in a multi-country consortium. Academic and administrative staff gained the intercultural experience of working with cEU countries and with their neighbouring countries. Often only within an EU-funded international consortium does it become possible to receive endorsement by both the HEI and the national authorities to collaborate with HEIs from neighbouring countries.

3.2.2. Students

One of the main drivers of internationalisation has been the need for universities to attract excellent students and professors to raise the level of education offered and to become more competitive in the global education market. The CBHE action has helped HEIs to set up high-level study programmes, which has increased the visibility and appeal of the HEI in the national context and contributed to stopping brain drain. Cooperation with EU partners also provides students with an environment in which their **merits will be fairly treated** in societies that are marked by **nepotism and corruption**.

- ▶ Within the CBHE project, students were enrolled in new or upgraded courses, received training or took part in a mobility

The impact of the CBHE projects on students has been manifold. They have been beneficiaries of modernised or new study programmes and have been exposed to innovative teaching and learning methods and motivational approaches. The work done with new or improved equipment and infrastructure, exchanges with foreign academics, and use of new methodologies and short and long-term mobility (available to all three cycles) has enhanced both the academic and practical competences of students.

There are numerous examples of **joint research projects and joint publications** initiated after successful cooperation within CBHE projects. In fact, this research work often takes place in parallel with the CBHE project. Staff and students mobility has allowed the **supervision of doctoral candidates by staff from international partners**, improving the quality of research and enhancing the reputation of the associated HEI.

Graduate **entry to the labour market** in the Region is often **precarious** and they experience periods of unemployment of various duration before they find stable employment. This transition from the academic world to the labour market is hampered by a relatively low level of cooperation between HEIs and employers in relation to curriculum design and recruitment. Few employers are involved in the discussions of new curricula.

The CBHE action **strongly encourages cooperation of HEIs with the labour market**. In a number of projects, private sector representatives are involved in designing new curricula that are more appealing and relevant for the business world. Professors who internalise this entrepreneurial and long-term perspective have been the main exponents of this cooperation, which has translated into internships for students and, in some cases, job offers after graduation. Evidence shows that curriculum development projects working closely with private sector partners, and including internships within university education, have a higher graduate employability rate and are therefore much more appealing to national and international students.

However, despite notable exceptions (see below) the overall involvement of private business partners in HEI curricula development is limited and lags behind expectations:

Substantial **policy gaps** exist within the region's HE system. Consequently, **substantial reforms and follow-up** are needed to improve their quality and enhance their contribution to economic competitiveness. The improvement of education quality has been a key theme in the **reform of HE in the Region** for several years.

CAPacity Building in Sustainability and Environmental Management (CAPSem) (574218-EPP-1-2016-1-NO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Partner Country HEIs in Uganda, Nepal and India are committed to continue collaboration through industry partnership and public organisations.. Improved collaboration with industry has increased HEIs perspectives in teaching, research and community-based learning activities.

Some CBHE projects include concrete support structures, such as career centres, incubators or students support services, which have developed strategic and sustainable links with the labour market and provide training.

A number of the HEIs are involved in projects to establish **language-learning centres** or to improve the **language skills** of students, who enjoyed this linguistic training by attending newly developed English courses, joining mobility opportunities and accessing research material in foreign languages.

Although the students are the main end beneficiaries of the CBHE projects, they have only been sporadically involved in project activities. The development and modernisation of curricula, and therefore the identification of student needs for their future, is seen as the domain of the HEI and their academic staff in Region. CBHE projects have not yet reached the point where students participate in building their future.

3.2.3. Administrative staff

CBHE projects also have an impact on administrative staff. This relates particularly to staff from the **offices for international affairs and staff responsible for project financial management**, who have to be well acquainted with the regulations and procedures relating to project implementation.

Although administrative and financial staff are key people in international cooperation, their role is not always very visible in the project activities. Moreover, given the nature of their work, they are rarely the first to participate in mobility opportunities. However, regular interaction via email and skype with their counterparts in other countries has brought learning opportunities and given them insights into best practice in financial and grant management. Sometimes, they have been able to **introduce new practices within their own HEI systems**. Dealing with international projects, they have to work in English and in this way, their language skills tend to considerably improve. The equipment budget has allowed administrative staff to purchase new technology and to use their newly acquired skills for the benefit of their home HEI. Some CBHE projects specifically target administrative staff:

Strengthening of Collaboration, Leadership and Professionalization in Research Management in SADC and EU Higher Education Institutions (STORM) (574169-EPP-1-2016-1-ZA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The specific objective of the project is to improve effective and strategic management of research portfolios by increasing capacity of research administrators and managers.

3.2.4. Entrepreneurs/Employers

Most of the **companies** that participate as partners in CBHE projects **are small and medium enterprises (SMEs)**. CBHE projects have given these enterprises access to experts in specific fields, as well as to research laboratories and specialised equipment. Businesses have benefitted from this partnership to develop new products and to find students to work on new processes and equipment.

HEIs are a rich recruitment ground for businesses, which use internships to test potential future staff. In a number of CBHE projects, businesses are part of review panels and participate directly in the curriculum design process. They are also involved in defining the specifications of the equipment needs for the labs.

**Development of a Harmonized Modular Curriculum for the Smart Grid (DAMOC)
(574173-EPP-1-2016-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

Two Smart GRID Labs are established in the universities of Zambia and South Africa to enable real-time experiments to support research investigations of master students and to enable them to verify theoretical parts of the modules by experimentation. Planning, concept development, and determination of equipment specifications in the Smart Grid Lab in the project was done jointly with industrial partners Alectrix, etalumiSe, and Eskom, and in consultation with various vendors.

However, this is not always the case and most curriculum development projects instead carry out industry surveys to establish the precise needs of the labour market. It is important to note that the labour market includes not only the private sector, but also NGOs and the public sector.

In addition, training courses for practitioners were introduced, sometimes on a fee-paying basis, which contributes to the sustainability of the activities.

**CAPacity Building in Sustainability and Environmental Management (CAPSem)
(574218-EPP-1-2016-1-NO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)**

This project organised environmental sustainability and environmental management training seminars and courses for industry partners, national authorities and NGOs which have continued following the end of the project. Given that industry partners were involved in the courses' development process, it was assured that they include content defined by the practical needs of target stakeholders, assuring the sustainability of the project results.



4. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Regional Cooperation

There is significant potential for internationalisation through intraregional cooperation. Several important initiatives already exist to foster such cooperation in both teaching and research. Academics in the region are eager to seek cooperation with institutions from the neighbouring countries. Indeed, when there is a preference for international cooperation, geographic or cultural closeness (expressed in factors such as language and religion and a tradition of cooperation) tends to prevail.

In certain countries, relations between HEIs – before they started their collaboration in the frame of the CBHE projects – were quite competitive. However, after having worked together HEIs often discovered **hidden benefits** of collaboration. For example, some HEIs realised that **sharing resources**, such as research databases, open learning platforms and scientific laboratories, is quite feasible and even saves costs for geographically small countries like those in the region.

The sharing of resources within the CBHE projects has led to greater interaction between professors and more active sharing of ideas. Hence, with successful cooperation within a CBHE project, the universities are in a good position to establish **dual degrees**:

Learning and Teaching Tools Fueling University Relations with the Economy in Mozambique and South Africa (LaTFURE) (573579-EPP-1-2016-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

This structural project is developing and adopting legal and policy frameworks. Its final aim is to establish two dual study programmes in South Africa and two dual study programmes in Mozambique in the fields of extractive industries and tourism. These will demonstrate proof-of-concept and provide working prototypes for replication and systemic expansion.

The CBHE action has contributed significantly to the strengthening of cooperation in the region. It provides a means by which HEIs can work together on themes of mutual interest across national and ethnic boundaries. It also promotes people-to-people contact which helps to change mentalities and reduce prejudices.

A number of academic subject areas lend themselves to a regional dimension such as agriculture, engineering and environmental studies. These therefore tend to promote regional cooperation. In working together, exchanging processes, results and best practices, each country has learned from its neighbours. The creation of regional budget envelopes has further fostered regional cooperation and exchange.

It is also interesting to note that as a result of the cross-regional projects, cooperation has increased among several countries in various other world regions.

Development of a Harmonized Modular Curriculum for the Smart Grid (DAMOC) (574173-EPP-1-2016-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

This project has established an African Smart Grid Education Network (ASGEN) with the aim of developing an operational network in Africa by propagating Smart Grid Technology (www.asgen.org).

4.2. National Education Reforms

Structural projects are of particular importance for triggering and supporting developments and reforms of the national education systems in the Partner Countries. The majority of the Structural Projects (**86%**) are therefore single country (**national**) projects.

Analysis has shown that successful CBHE projects have sparked national debates and highlighted policy gaps, which led to **policy and legislative reforms**. Since participation of education ministries in Structural Projects is obligatory, the CBHE action has also laid the basis for cooperation between HEIs and national authorities:

Learning and Teaching Tools Fueling University Relations with the Economy in Mozambique and South Africa (LaTRURE) (573579-EPP-1-2016-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP)

The Ministries of Education in Mozambique and South Africa participate actively in the project, which has the tangible goal of developing and designing adaptable mechanisms and tools for an easily replicable dual study programme. The participation of the ministries in policy seminar and other dissemination events further enhance the visibility and sustainability of the project results.

Despite success stories **in reforming the national legislation**, the process is not always smooth. Many ministry officials were not used to this bottom-up approach and limited language skills acted as a barrier, increasing their resistance. In addition, there has often been a **lack of awareness and proper follow-up from ministries**. This became obvious during cluster meetings specifically organised for Structural Projects, where it happened that certain ministry representatives showed (positive) surprise regarding the existence of CBHE projects addressing national needs, whereas the ministry itself was an official partner in the project consortium.

Overall, the vast majority of Structural Projects contributed **significantly** to the policy objectives of the Partner Countries.

5. INCLUSIVENESS

5.1. People with Fewer Opportunities

Challenges remain in the areas of inequality, access to higher education and inclusion.

Improving the socio-economic situation of disabled, women, migrant and marginalised populations in general should be further encouraged by the action. A more systemic approach should be encouraged, involving the mainstreaming and institutionalising of good practices and reporting with clear indications.

Many of the funded projects target people with fewer opportunities, in some cases directly but also as a corollary of the overall project activities.

Social Inclusion and Energy Management for Informal Urban Settlements (SES) (573046-EPEP-1-2016-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

The issue of migration is central to the phenomenon of rapid urbanization in the Ethiopian context: Even though the country's vast population is still predominantly rural, recent decades have seen unprecedented rural-urban migration, which remains unabated to this day. However, many aspects of this process, such as the mechanisms that provide migrants with housing in distinct "arrival" locations, are still widely unexplored, poorly understood and grossly overlooked by administrations and politics. Therefore, several of the SES project's case studies address these questions directly. In so doing, they investigate mechanisms of people's adaptation to shifting economic constraints in diverse locations, which are not only relevant for domestic but also international migration.

CAPacity Building in Sustainability and Environmental Management (CAPSem) (574218-EPP-1-2016-1-NO-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP)

Over one million refugees from South Sudan have now settled in Northern Uganda. The project consortium has analysed the currently unsustainable energy used for cooking as well as a study on sources of livelihood at two refugee camps in Uganda. The investigations have shown that long-term interventions are required to address the environmental degradation of settlement areas and ensure viable alternatives to energy sources. The partners are then able to suggest solutions based on CapSEM methods, and investigate the possibility of future technologies.

5.2. Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

Even though all the ACP countries have been encouraged to participate in the CBHE action, only 29 of the 79 ACP countries have taken part as of in the action by 2019⁴. The figure is small partly due to the limited funding for the Region and partly because of the limited knowledge of the programme in particular in the Pacific (no participation) and Caribbean countries⁵, but also in Africa.

Stronger promotion and investment in these regions, Africa, Caribbean, Pacific, are needed to increase their level of participation and the impact on their higher education systems and societies at large. However, this need to be matched with sufficient funding.

Nevertheless, LDCs in Sub-Saharan Africa are very well represented along the first projects financed. Eight projects of the selected nine involve LDCs from sub-Saharan Africa. The following countries are involved in the projects, Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda.

There are thus good practices where the universities from the LDC have brought about a positive impact and innovated their institutions and the higher education system.

5.3. Institutions Located in less developed regions

Cooperation among HEIs from remote areas is especially important for the Region in order to reach vulnerable populations located in these areas. The countries in the Region tend to be strongly centralised and to accumulate resources and opportunities in capitals, which reinforces the need to promote and encourage participation of universities underrepresented by country located in remote areas or in vulnerable zones.

In the Region, the CBHE action succeeded in reaching HEIs outside the capitals, involving participation from HEIs located throughout the territory.



⁴ ACP countries that have not participated in the programme by 2019: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cook Islands, Djibouti, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Micronesia, Nauru, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe

⁵ As of 2019, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago have taken part in the CBHE action.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The EU cooperation policy with ACP countries primarily aims to reduce poverty in the Region. It also contributes to other international priorities such as sustainable economic, social and environmental development, respect for human rights, promotion of democracy, rule of law and good governance. This is in accordance with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Within this context, the CBHE 2016 projects have promoted higher education exchanges and cooperation between the EU and ACP countries contributing to the establishing of several regional university partnerships and collaborative networks as well as mutually beneficial linkages in learning and teaching and, by extension, making a strong contribution to the evolution of the regional higher education area.

A first analysis of a small sample of 2016 project reports - most of which are still ongoing - has shown that CBHE projects play an important role in the support and development of education systems in the Partner Countries. The higher education sector is a driving force for the economy and society as a whole and the role of the CBHE action is important as it has a long-term structural effect on the Partner Countries. A number of best practice examples show in an impressive way the benefits that CBHE projects can have on educational systems, HE institutions and individuals (academics, administrative university staff, and students).

However, the impact of the CBHE action can be further improved by looking at the challenges that were identified via the sample of final project reports and the monitoring activities (desk monitoring, monitoring missions, cluster meetings) conducted by the Agency. Some of the challenges refer to the CBHE action as a whole, others specifically to the ACP region and in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa.

6.1. Challenges

- The CBHE action has a large number of **recurrent beneficiaries**, both institutions and individuals. In the long term, this leads to a **lack of innovative and creative project ideas** (and few new collaborations) and diminishes the impact of the CBHE action in the Region.
- The Region is relatively new to the programme and the Partner Country HEIs do not yet have sufficient knowledge of the EU financial regulations and experience of international project management in order to take a lead and coordinate projects.
- The success rate of the projects to be funded in the calls is around 15% and the quality of proposals is increasing yearly. This means that the funding is not sufficient for the interest shown in the Region. For the same reason, there is not very widespread knowledge of the existence of this programme and its provision of funding opportunities across the ACP Region.
- The **unit costs for travelling** should be revised in order to be closer to the real costs. In particular, in Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, the flight prices are very expensive, and do not reflect the unit costs.
- **Internationalisation strategies** in HEIs are often absent or insufficiently developed. The creation of project consortia often lack a long-term strategic vision for the development of the HEIs, and proposals are developed because of existing or recurrent collaborations.

- The large maximum grant amount of EUR 1 million sometimes leads to ‘inflated’ project budgets and lowers cost efficiency of project activities. In terms of staff costs, we observed that individual professors and consultants worked on several CBHE projects in parallel, thus incurring high staff costs. This kind of project monopolisation by individuals is not desirable and leads to projects that are thematically repetitive, and to suboptimal project results.
- The participation of **non-academic partners** in CBHE projects is limited and involving private business remains a challenge. Finding mechanisms to integrate more non-academic partners is vital given their importance for ensuring the relevance of new and updated study programmes applicable to the labour market.
- **Accreditation** is sometimes problematic because it takes a long time and does not allow the running of degree programmes within the eligibility period of the CBHE project. Another challenge is the whole accreditation process being on hold due to a blocking legislation procedure.
- **Regional, cross-regional, and even national projects** face various administrative and management challenges due to different rules and regulations applicable in different countries. This is particularly true for tendering procedures. On average, one third of the CBHE grant is reserved for the purchase of equipment. Complications and delays in the tendering procedures generate significant implementation problems for projects and sometimes equipment will only be available at the very end of a project’s duration.
- The ability to **reach out beyond the initial partnership** needs to be further developed and should become a key priority for the projects. Intensive dissemination of project outcomes and results during and after the project funding period plays an important role. Excellent results should be more highly valued and shared with other HEIs working in the same field and facing the same challenges.
- For a number of CBHE projects, appropriate **institutional endorsement** by HEI administration is not or only partially in place. HEIs must invest more in using CBHE projects for strategic development and provide adequate support via international offices and financial departments. A frequent lack of cooperation and communication between different CBHE projects (and with other funded Erasmus+ initiatives) within the same institution has frequently been observed.
- Proper **involvement of decision makers and national authorities** (especially for Structural Projects) is lacking for many projects. This is concomitant with a lack of commitment by the national authorities to follow-up and incorporate the CBHE projects and results into their national educational strategies.
- There is a lack of **financial autonomy on the part of HEIs**. Without their own funds and separate bank accounts at HEI level, institutions face severe challenges regarding financial management and the implementation of international projects. This causes huge administrative burden and delays project activities since the request for funds may require lengthy procedures engaging many hierarchical levels for approval. This jeopardises the sustainability of the project results because the regulations hinder attempts to generate additional income, for example via consultancy and research services.
- Public HEIs are **understaffed at administrative and academic levels**. If no qualified academics are available, this can lead to the withdrawal of the accreditation for study programmes.

- In the majority of cases, **students** are not participating in project conception, design and implementation in the majority of cases. Rather, they are integrated at the end of the CBHE project during testing phase, if at all. If the expectations and needs of students or student associations (which could be part of project consortia) are not sufficiently taken into account, this lowers the relevance of their studies for the labour market and the sustainability of the funded degree programmes.
- The **sustainability of project results** is often not sufficiently addressed by the consortia, particularly, in public universities. Conversely, for private universities, the sustainability of project results appears to be more effective as private HEIs have managed to attract students with their new study programmes based on a ‘business plan’.

6.2. Recommendations

The analyses of the 2016 CBHE projects together with the challenges identified suggest the following recommendations for changes and improvements:

- The **level of funding** in the Region should be increased in order to reach sufficient geographical and thematic diversity for regional projects. This should be matched by more effective information distribution regarding funding opportunities targeting the Pacific region in particular.
- The action should focus more on **targeted structural change** in the Partner Countries. The **Structural Projects** should be better integrated and brought in line with the national priorities of Partner Countries for the development of their educational systems. The Ministries of Education play a critical role in the operation, upscaling and mainstreaming of CBHE project results and adequate measures should be established to better link them to the Structural Projects.
- More HEIs must adopt **a strategic approach** and focus their participation in the CBHE action on projects that are in line with their medium and long-term priorities and development goals. This ‘strategic interest’ orientation will then lead to a better support of the CBHE projects (e.g. on the part of the international office and finance department), the encouragement of dialogue between projects implemented at the same HEI and above all to better project sustainability of the projects following the end of their funding period.
- The **institutional capacity of Partner Country HEIs** to manage international projects needs to be further developed. Although there has been a positive evolution of institutions taking charge of CBHE project coordination, the Partner Country HEIs need more training and support to develop innovative project ideas, to submit competitive proposals and to ensure high quality in the implementation and management of international projects.
- The **diversity of HEIs** and individuals in the CBHE action needs to increase. The CBHE action focuses on high value projects and this favours experienced (often recurrent) and large HEIs. The ‘entry barriers’ for smaller institutions and newcomers are high. One way to counterbalance this challenge would be to dedicate a share of the budget to smaller projects covering certain types of activities only (i.e. staff training activities, university professors exchanges, module updates, summer schools, etc.). However, such an approach is more labour-intensive to manage from EACEA, and would require the introduction of simplified funding modalities (e.g. lump sums) and simplified or external monitoring of project activities.

- The **involvement of some professors in several parallel projects** (as coordinators and/or partners) - which sees them benefitting from generous salary 'multiplications' - needs to be reviewed as it undermines the quality of project outputs.
- The **involvement of private business and relevant stakeholders** (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, professional associations, etc.) in CBHE projects needs to be increased when the connection to the world of work is important and students need relevant labour market skills. New approaches should be developed to ensure a significant participation, both quantitatively and qualitatively, of companies active in the Region. Mandatory involvement of non-academic partners could be envisaged, where appropriate.
- **Students, and student associations** should take part in CBHE projects (were relevant) from the very beginning. This would enrich project development and implementation and allow a better match between project outcomes and student expectations and interests. This would also contribute to guaranteeing project sustainability, particularly for curriculum development projects.
- The **inclusion of more young academics** in CBHE projects would provide them with opportunities for continuous professional development and career options, and contribute to the fight against the brain drain.
- **More academics from Programme Countries** should visit the Partner Country HEIs to teach as **guest lecturers** in graduate and postgraduate courses (BA, MA and doctoral programmes) within the curriculum projects. This would improve knowledge transfer and enforce ties and networks between institutions, as well as provide more visibility and credibility vis-à-vis the student body.





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Erasmus+

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action

Regional Report African Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP)

Resume

This report is based on the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency's evaluation of the first nine interim reports of the second generation of the CBHE projects selected for funding in 2016, which was when the programme opened for first time to the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Region.