OUTCOMES REPORT

SHIFTING PARADIGMS:
Building Future Capacities and New Narratives through African Education
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OUR MISSION

Promoting Enlightened Engagement Between Africa and America through Education, Training and Dialogue

The SOE 2018 Outcomes Report was produced by the Africa-America Institute. The principal authors are Melissa Howell, Lindsey Burgess, Chantal Uwizera, and Jourden Williams.
LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Africa-America Institute, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all the sponsors, presenters, panelists and attendees who joined AAI for the 4th Annual State of Education in Africa Conference in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.

Throughout AAI’s 65-year history, we have remained committed to the education and training of Africans. The State of Education in Africa Conference hopes to bring together governmental, corporate, non-profit and educational leaders from across Africa and the world who have the responsibility for teaching, curriculum development, and the infrastructure and financing of education on the continent.

The 4th Annual State of Education in Africa Conference was an overwhelming success with representatives from five African nations, and increased participation from corporations, foundations and educational leaders from across the continent and the world.

In Abidjan, it was especially gratifying to see the success of the Alumni Reception on the eve of the conference, and H.E. Alassane Ouattara, an Alumnus of AAI, participate in the conference.

AAI’s community of over 16,000 Alumni are at the forefront of Africa’s public, non-profit and private sectors, represent a unique asset of AAI. We hope to see more of them at future SOE Conferences and other events held across the continent.

AAI remains committed to the belief that education is the single best investment that any country, community or family can make. We thank each of our partners, co-sponsors and participants who share this belief and who made the SOE in Africa an overwhelming success in Abidjan. We hope to work with each of you again for the 5th Annual State of Education in Africa Conference to be held in the November of 2019.

Best,

Steven B. Pfeiffer
Chairman
The Africa-America Institute
AAI thanks its sponsors and partners for the 2018 State of Education in Africa conference.

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Board, staff and alumni of the Africa-America Institute, I want to thank all the panelists, participants and sponsors for helping to ensure that the 4th Annual State of Education in Africa (SOE) conference was an overwhelming success.

I would like to express our sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to our host country, The Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, and local partners in Abidjan. We were particularly honored to host this year’s event in Côte d’Ivoire and to have His Excellency Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire open the Conference. H.E. President Alassane Ouattara is one of AAI’s distinguished Alumni, having participated in the AAI African Graduate Fellowship Program, graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with a Doctorate in Economics. We are honored to continue our engagement with H.E. President Ouattara and are grateful for his continued support of AAI’s mission.

This year’s conference, titled “Shifting Paradigms: Building Future Capacities and New Narratives Through African Education”, marked the first-time AAI offered the SOE as a bilingual event, and the first time the conference was held in a French-speaking African country.

The conversations started in Abidjan have already extended beyond the SOE and it is our hope that they will continue to lead to partnerships that help African higher education play its role in rising to the challenges and opportunities created by the burgeoning population of youth. It is these collective actions, through partnerships, that are essential to enable young people to navigate their own pathways to livelihood.

Following the conference, AAI has committed to the development of the West African Collaborative on Higher Education (WACHE) with the support of His Excellencies President Alassane Ouattara and President Nana Akufo-Addo President of the Republic of Ghana. We look forward to the development of this program and welcome partnerships in the public, private and non-profit sectors across West Africa.

As we prepare for the 5th State of Education in Africa Conference in 2019, we continue to foster the partnerships that were created during the 4th annual State of Education in Africa conference and we look forward to remaining engaged with those who attended.

In closing, I would like to express AAI’s sincere appreciation to our hosts in Abidjan, with a special note of thanks to our presenting sponsors, the Ford Foundation, TRECC, IE University, the Mai Family Foundation, Greystone, the Jim Ovia Foundation, the Financial Times and Ethiopian Airlines. The generosity, vision and commitment of our sponsors and our partners were critical to a successful convening. We are deeply grateful.

Kofi Appenteng
President
The Africa-America Institute
SOE 2018 SPEAKERS

Soro N’golo Aboudou  
UNESCO

Khevine Ange Aka  
INP-HB, Student

Dr. Ousseina Alidou  
Rutgers University

Y. Obenewa Amponsah  
Harvard University

Felicia Appenteng  
IE Africa Center

Kofi Appenteng  
The Africa-America Institute

Dr. Kétévi Adiklé Assamagan  
Brookhaven National Laboratory

Dr. Solomon Assefa  
IBM Research

N'Dri T. Assié-Lumumba, Ph D  
Cornell University

Sidick Bakayoko  
Paradise Game

Himdat Bayusuf  
World Bank

Lise Birikundavyi  
TRECC

Dr. Koutou N’Guessan Claude  
University of Félix Houphouët Boigny

Dr. Phillip Clay  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

Lawalley Cole  
Coalition on Media and Education for Development Africa Forum (CAFOR)
SOE 2018 SPEAKERS

Sarah Diouf
Tongoro Studio

William Egbe
The Jacobs Foundation

Franck Abd-Bakar Fanny
Artist & Entrepreneur

Amy Fanny-Tognisso
ESP Capital

Concepcion Galdon
IE University

Sosthenè Guei
TRECC

Olaf Hahn
ESSA

Melissa Howell
The Africa-America Institute

Karine Jones
Aesthetic Candy

Amini Kajunju
IUGB Foundation

Wanjira Kamwere
Microsoft 4Afrika Initiative

Anna Christelle
N’Guessan Kanga
INP-HB, Student

Yasmine Katieneva
Kone
INP-HB, Student

Elizabeth Amoin
Kouame
INP-HB, Student

Hon. Minister Dr. Abdallah Albert Toikeusse Mabri
Republic of Côte d’Ivoire
SOE 2018 SPEAKERS

Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima
Ford Foundation

Hon. Minister Professor Alkassoum Maïga
Republic of Burkina Faso

Dr. Beatrice Magundo
Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR)

Brian McGinley
The Africa-America Institute

Koffi N’Guessan
Institut National Polytechnique, Felix-Houphouet Boigny (INP-HB)

Khady Dior Ndiaye
Citibank

Emmanuel Nsadha
Syracuse University; PhD Student

Abiola Oke
OkayAfrica

Nneka Okekearu
Enterprise Development Centre

Dr. Amadou Ouane
Republic of Mali

H.E. Alassane Ouattara
President of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire

Simon Rey
Ecobank Transnational

Laura C. Rudert
Millennium Challenge Corporation

Erana M. Stennett
Bloomberg Media Initiative Africa

Professor Amadou Abdoul Sow
Republic of Senegal
SOE 2018 SPEAKERS

Dr. Saliou Toure
International University of Grand Bassam (IUGB)

Sabina Vigani
Jacobs Foundation

Bob Wekesa
University of the Witwatersrand

Dabone Yacouba
INP-HB, Student

Honorable Minister
Professor Kwesi Yankah
The Republic of Ghana
THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA CONFERENCE

www.soefrica.org

In 2014, the Africa-America Institute (AAI) launched the first State of Education in Africa Conference (SOE) to provide a platform for dialogue and debate among key stakeholders in African Higher Education with the aim of identifying opportunities for collective action towards its transformation.

In the four SOEs held in New York City, Lagos, Nairobi and Abidjan, the conference has looked at varying topics including Early Childhood Education, Teacher Training, Reforming Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education, Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Innovative Financing for Education, and Narratives on Africa and on Afro-descendant women and men. We have hosted an EdTech Pitch Competition and for two years have welcomed student speakers as panelists. For each conference held in an African country, AAI has sought to work with government ministers to host a gathering of thought leaders around topics that are most relevant to pressing and projected issues. The conference has welcomed the participation of Ministers of Higher Education and for the first time in 2018, a Head of State was present to open the conference.

In the past two years, AAI has narrowed the focus of the conference to examine the role of higher education in creating sustainable pathways for Africans to secure the means to achieve and maintain a quality and thriving livelihood; developing relevant training and education programs as pipelines towards a highly-skilled, competitive, 21st century workforce; and integrating knowledge about the role of Africa in the world and the achievements of Afro-descendants into the core of education curricula.

Presenters share their visions and transformative ideas for addressing challenges produced by a rapidly changing landscape on the continent and promote a lively forum to engage open discussion on how to build globally-competitive higher education systems. We hope that this report gives you a sense of the richness of the conference.

Join us as we explore opportunities for transformative improvement in how higher education creates new pathways for Africans to livelihoods and how we can all help build powerful new narratives by learning more about the role of Africa in the world and the achievements of Afro-descendant women and men.
The Africa-America Institute is delighted to have hosted its 4th annual State of Education Conference (SOE 2018) in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. It was the first year the conference was held in a French-speaking country, included opening remarks from a head of state, His Excellency President Alassane Ouattara, and hosted multiple ministers of education from throughout the West African region.

The theme for SOE 2018 was “Shifting Paradigms: Building Future Capacities and New Narratives through African Education”. This title represents the historical era the world is fast-approaching – a 21st century transformation fuelled by innovation in digital technologies and sustainable practices, where success will rest, in large measure, on the degree to which African human capital is harnessed.

For the first time, AAI fully integrated its strategic pillars into the structure and content of the conference. The first day of the conference was dedicated to exploring the development of “Pathways to Livelihood”. Panel topics on this day included higher education transformation, workforce development, effective partnerships and collaborations, and discussions on local, national and regional education opportunities and challenges.

We dedicated the second day of the conference to our second pillar, “Africa Illuminated,” a portfolio approach that broadly examines integrating knowledge about the role of Africa in the world and the achievements of Afro-descendants into the core of education curricula. Panels included experts in education, research, government and key disciplines of media, data and technology, arts and culture, and African epistemologies.

This year’s panels were broadly representative of the key stakeholders in African higher education, with interest from the private, public and social sectors. After the conference, we used an online survey tool to gain a deeper understanding of attendees’ perspectives on the value, usefulness and quality of the conference experience. Surveying attendees offers AAI valuable input on how we can continue to improve the SOE conference in support of our host country, attendees and broader African Higher Education communities in achieving their mission.

SOE 2018 saw a significant increase in participation from government/policymakers, university professors, and university students. A rise in government interest in higher education can also serve as a catalyst for fostering future partnerships with private funders and international NGOs who see higher education in Africa as a means of economic opportunity and sustainability throughout the next decade.

Although all panels were highly ranked according to their relevancy to African Higher Education, we were especially pleased that “African Epistemologies: Histories & Futures through African Agency” was assessed as ‘extremely relevant’. It was clear from the survey responses that a multi-faceted program can support attendees and participants in connecting their technical expertise with practical application, case studies, and comparative reviews. A Boston Globe op-ed by Dr. Deborah Fitzgerald supports this view. Dr. Fitzgerald, an MIT Professor of the History of Technology in Science, Technology and Society cited, “many MIT graduates—from doctors to engineers to entrepreneurs—have testified to the usefulness of studying a broad range of disciplines, citing courses in history, literature, and philosophy as crucial to developing their empathy and critical thinking skills.”

We look forward to hosting more State of Education in Africa conferences, with the hope of producing lively and enlightening discussion on the transformation of higher education in Africa.
IE University and TRECC sponsored the conference VIP & Alumni reception held on October 8, 2018 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. The reception welcomed all conference speakers, sponsors, local alumni and special guests from government and international agencies for a private kick-off to the 2018 State of Education in Africa conference. TRECC and IE University provided welcoming remarks and brief presentations on their current priorities.
Since 1953, the Africa-America Institute has provided over 20,000 scholarships and fellowships to African Students. These Africans are now an esteemed network of alumni, many of whom are leaders and influencers across public, private and governmental sectors in Africa and globally.

The State of Education in Africa conference provides an opportunity for AAI to spotlight some of their work and various achievements as professional leaders and in challenging the future of Higher Education in Africa. Five alumni from scholarship programs between 1965-2018 participated in our latest conference.

His Excellency President Alassane Ouattara of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire
AAI AFGRAD Scholar
1965 - 1972
University of Pennsylvania
PhD in Economics

Dr. Ousseina Alidou
Professor of Africa, Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Literatures
Rutgers University
AAI AFGRAD Scholar
1990 - 1994
Ohio State University

Dr. Kétévi Adiklè Assamagan
Physicist
US Department of Energy’s Brookhaven National Laboratory
AAI AFGRAD Scholar
1987 - 1995
University of Virginia
PhD in Nuclear Physics

Dr. Lawalley Cole
Executive Director
Coalition on Media and Education for Development Africa Forum
AAI AFGRAD Scholar
1982 - 1985
University of Massachusetts
MA in education

Emmanel Nsadha
PhD Candidate
Syracuse University
AAI EADB STEM Scholar
2016 - 2017
Rutgers University
MA in Math Education
The Africa-America Institute (AAI) was delighted to have His Excellency Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, open the 4th Annual State of Education in Africa Conference (SOE), the first time this Conference was addressed by a Head of State. President Ouattara is a distinguished AAI alumnus, having participated in the AAI African Graduate Fellowship Program (AFGRAD) to obtain a Doctorate in Economics in 1972 from the University of Pennsylvania. Over the years, the Africa America Institute has contributed to the training of more than 16,000 African students, including 300 Ivorian students who now hold positions of leadership in the public and private sectors.

Since taking office in 2011, President Ouattara has been systematically rebuilding Côte d’Ivoire following many years of political turmoil and civil conflict. Under his leadership, political stability has been restored. As the World Bank reports, Côte d’Ivoire continues to be one of Africa’s most vibrant economies, whose growth is expected to remain around 7.6% in 2018 and 2019. In 2014, the Africa-America Institute awarded the AAI National Achievement Award to the people of Côte d’Ivoire in recognition of the remarkable progress the of Côte d’Ivoire under the leadership of President Ouattara.

Thank you very much dear friends,
Mr. Vice-President of the Republic,
Mr. Inspector General,
Distinguished Ministers,
Dear brothers from Burkina Faso, Ghana,
Representatives of the Ministers of Mali and Senegal,
Dear young brother Albert Mabri Toikeusse, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Excellencies Ambassadors;
Mr. President of the Africa-America Institute,
Ladies and Gentlemen, and
Dear friends from the media, honourable guests.

First of all, I must say how happy I am to take part in the opening ceremony of the 4th annual of the State of Education in Africa Conference organized by the Africa-America Institute. As the President of the Institute and Albert Mabri Toikeusse mentioned earlier, I was a fellow of this prestigious institution a little over fifty years ago. But at that time, it was called the “African American Institute”. I will ask the President later why there was this change from “African American Institute” to “Africa America Institute” because I thought the “African American Institute” was not so bad.**

I would like to say how grateful I am for the opportunities that have been given to me by the Africa-America Institute to complete my graduate studies in the United States. I would also like to express my encouragement to the Institute, which has contributed to the training of more than 15,000 African students, including 300 Ivorian students who now hold leadership positions in the public and private sectors of their countries.

Honourable guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Côte d’Ivoire is proud to host this prestigious international meeting, the conclusions of which will have a significant impact on the education systems of African countries, provided, of course, that this is applied in the countries concerned.

The diversification of our economy, an ambitious vision that Côte d’Ivoire shares with all African countries, requires a structural transformation of our countries’ economy, particularly, the transition from agrarian to industrial production. Côte d’Ivoire is therefore making it a goal for the coming years because, as you know, our country is the world’s leading cocoa producer, but we only process a third of this production here in Côte d’Ivoire. We are the leading producer of cashew nuts and yet we only process 10% of them in Côte d’Ivoire. This means that the processing of our raw materials is one of our top priorities.

But this structural transformation requires human capital whose skills are compatible with the job market. This human capital must be able to innovate, start businesses, enter the labour market, and contribute sustainably to the development of national wealth and; support the country’s economic growth. So, to meet this need for development, Africa must put training/education at the heart of its priorities.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, our continent has spared no effort to improve access to basic education for Africans. However, the significant human, material and financial investments fall short due to two overarching challenges. The first one is the initial delay because 25% of the world’s illiterate adults now live in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is a huge number because, as you know, Africa’s population is just about 1.2 billion out of a total world population of 7 billion, so accounting for 25% of illiterate adults I would say is an unacceptable ratio.

The second thing of course is the very high population growth in Africa. As you know, demographic growth is high, which slows down poverty reduction. Even in Côte d’Ivoire we have a high population growth rate which is close to 3% per year. So, the African population currently represents 1/6 of the world population as I said: 1.2 billion out of 7 billion. But by 2050, this African population is expected to double to between 2.5 billion and 3 billion, so three of the ten most populous countries in the world will be on the African continent, in this case Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia, which will have populations of hundreds of millions of people. Nigeria already has 200 million inhabitants and the estimate goes beyond 600 million inhabitants by 2050. This means that this is a considerable challenge and that perhaps in connection with the improvement of education, governments must also try to benefit from this demographic dividend and see to what extent, even if 60% of the arable lands are in Africa, perhaps we should try to have a slightly more focused vision in relation to the demographic growth of our countries.

Côte d’Ivoire, for the past seven years, has had a growth rate of about 9% per year, so when you remove the 2.5% population growth, it amounts to a growth rate of less than 7% per year. This means that at this rate we can only double our GDP per capita every ten years. While if population growth was lower, we can have similar progress as in the case of China. President Xi Jinping told us in early September when we went to the China-Africa summit, that China now has 1.3 billion inhabitants. But you see, in 1978 China had a per capita income of about $300 and today China has a per capita income of over $8,200. This is in part because there was a policy to reduce the birth rate and population growth. Minister [Mabri], so this is still an important subject that we must try to develop at the level of the African Union.

Mr. Vice-President, especially as you deal with the African Union. In Africa we do not like to talk about these issues. We say “the more children we have, the better”. Perhaps this was true in the past, but if we want to have a better living standard for our people, if we want to
improve per capita income, and improve infrastructure, then we must seriously consider policies that lead to a reduction in population growth in our countries while accelerating economic growth. So you see with these figures I have given, 50 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa will not be enrolled in school in the coming years if nothing is done.

There is another equally worrying problem, namely the lack of equity and quality of education. For example, the 2017-2018 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report shows that, in Sub-Saharan Africa, a large proportion of students is unable to read after several years of schooling and that in the majority of African countries, less than 25% of students complete their secondary education.

In higher education, the systems are characterized by an explosion in the number of students, a deterioration in the quality of training, a mismatch between education and employment, and mass unemployment among graduates.

In Côte d’Ivoire, to remedy this situation, the Government has made significant investments. Mr. President Appenteng, you mentioned this earlier. I can tell you how we have proceeded in recent years. When I first became Prime Minister, we had only one university. From 1990 to 1993, we created a second university in Abidjan, the Abobo-Adjamé University, which is now called Nangui Abrogoua. So, that is in addition to the Félix Houphouet-Boigny University which is the University of Cocody. We created the University of Bouaké and have started the University of Daloa. Since taking office in 2011, we have rehabilitated all these universities, extended the University of Daloa as well as what existed from the university in Korhogo. We have built two new universities: one university in the Minister of Higher Education’s region in Man, the University of Man, even if it is embryonic, it has started; and the Virtual University of Côte d’Ivoire.

As President Appenteng said earlier, we have plans to build two more universities by 2020. Bondoukou University, which will eventually welcome 20,000 students and will specialize in the fields of Art, Social Sciences, Literature, Language, Architecture, Urban Planning and Sustainable Development. The other is the University of San Pedro which is designed to accommodate 3,000 students and the work has already begun this month of October 2018. This university will specialize in the fields of Marine Sciences and Shipbuilding, Agriculture, Agro-industry and Fisheries Resources, Buildings and Public Works, Tourism, Logistics and Medicine. You see, that’s until 2020, so over ten years of my mandate. But we are trying to have a long-term vision until 2030. That doesn’t mean I plan to stay in office until 2030. We are planning to build five new universities after 2020 because we have just, after my visit to one of the countries in the Middle East, signed an agreement to build a new university in Abengourou. We also have a project to build a university in Odienné and so on.

As you said Mr. Appenteng, we have focused on education which is important. I am not talking about the questions relating to the construction of high schools and the construction of secondary and primary schools. We made school compulsory for children from age 6 to 16 years old and asked that, if possible, disadvantaged families be able to benefit from free education. We also switched to the LMD system (Bachelor’s degree – Masters – PhD).

To address the remaining challenges, such as improving the quality of teaching, the Government is investing significant financial efforts. Over the period 2018-2020, the budget allocated to the education sector will amount to 3,805 billion CFA, that is 6.7 billion dollars. It is a significant amount; a percentage of GDP. Côte d’Ivoire’s annual budget, which was adopted only a week ago, is about 7 trillion a year. This gives you the importance we attach to education throughout our development strategies.

We hope that your work here will focus on the themes that constitute recurring problems for African higher education systems. I have already mentioned a number of them, but the first thing is the issue of innovative financing to alleviate the insufficient budgets of our states, and this concern teachers’ salaries and student grants. I must pay tribute to our first President who very quickly understood that for young Ivorians who received their degree from France and other countries to return to Côte d’Ivoire, teachers had to have high salaries. And I must say that teachers’ salaries in Côte d’Ivoire are among the highest in the sub-region if not on the continent as a whole. And so I encourage all countries to take a close look at this issue, first and foremost for the quality of education but also to avoid teachers’ strikes. We know how frequently teachers’ strikes occur. They take place in some countries and how they hinder the whole system in the present and eventually in the future.

The second question concerns the quality of teaching. In particular, the question of the relevance of skills and employment in the current context of the implementation of the LMD system. Thirdly, there is the use of digital technology in our universities in view of the growing number of students. That is why we have created a virtual university. This is a major concern for Côte d’Ivoire. For this year, mind you, more than 100,000 baccalaureate holders want to access universities and colleges. This is an important figure and I am sure that this number will increase over the years due to the implementation of the policy on compulsory schooling for children aged
6 to 16, which I have just mentioned, and which has been in place since 2015.

I noted the fourth point about social dialogue on campuses because, as I said earlier, strikes in the university sector, of course, penalize everyone. Both the students themselves, the parents and the entire nation. So it is important to have a truly constant and real social dialogue so that there are as few strikes as possible.

And finally, I would like to talk about curriculum reform, the objective of which is to encourage our universities to train citizens committed to the transformation of our societies. I am confident that your work will enable you to offer sustainable solutions to African policymakers in the education and skills training sector.

As for me, I would like to once again pay tribute to the Africa-America Institute and say that, you know, life is funny. Because when I received my scholarship to go to the United States, it was in 1962, many of you were not born, especially these young ladies. I did everything I could not to go there. I remember we went to Paris. We had to wait for the boat in Le Havre. I still remember the name of the boat. It was called the Gruber. There was the Little Rock, Arkansas event where a young black American boy was prevented from going to university and of course everyone said, if you go there, they will catch you and they will mistreat you. I even threw my ticket in the garbage and on the day of departure I said, “But ah, I don’t have a ticket. I can’t leave. I can’t leave. I can’t travel.” And it was at a time when President Houphouet was in Paris and he gave instructions and I was able to travel without a ticket on the Gruber to New York. That means that fate always catches up with you.

So, I am happy to have made this trip despite all the reticence I had because the Africa-America Institute has given me a lot. I will give you a second anecdote. When we arrived in the United States in August 1962, we were hosted by families. We were separated from each other and spread out in American families, for four months, to try to learn English through immersion, to allow us to learn the language more easily because many of us were the first French-speaking students at that time. We went there and then we were sent to a college, Wolverton, I think was the name of the college, Wolverton College. So there were many of us; Ivorians, Malians and Congolese. There were about ten nationalities. And then, to our great surprise, at the beginning of the year, we were called by the university’s financial department and were told: “Here you are, you’re here for four months until December and our policy is to give you an allowance for your living expenses for the four months. “I think the allowance for four months was $500, which is not bad in 1962. So half of those who were with us, as soon as they got the money, they booked a trip and went to Paris because it was so cold after that in Wolverton. They considered that money as a windfall to be enjoyed and of course their countries did what was necessary to get them back to the US. I can tell you that I still have very vivid memories of those years of schooling with the Africa-America Institute and I would like, Mr. President, to pay tribute to that institute and thank you for the opportunity I was given. But I tell the young people that if I got that scholarship, it’s because I was first in math, first in French, first in physics, so I encourage you to work very, very hard!

Thank you very much. I hope that this meeting will lead to some useful recommendations, I am sure, for all our countries and I declare open the 4th Conference on the State of Education in Africa organized by the Africa-America Institute, with all my thanks. Have a good day!

*The original speech was delivered at the SOE in French, any errors of translation are the responsibility of AAI.

**AAI was founded in 1953 as the Institute for African American Relations. It soon changed its name to The African-American Institute. In 2000, in recognition of the new meaning of African-American, the name was changed to the Africa-America Institute.
Each year, AAI invites the Ministry of Education of the Host Country to present on their nation’s own state of education. This year, Dr. Albert Abdallah Toikeusse Mabri, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Côte d’Ivoire provided a comprehensive overview of the current Higher Education strategy for Côte d’Ivoire. He presented obstacles the country is facing in implementing its 10-year strategic plan, and he outlined areas for partners and funders to provide support in program or financial gaps. Below are highlights of the presentation which outlines progress the plan has been making in each strategic focal area and challenges that have arisen during the process.

DEFINING CURRENT CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN CÔTE D’IVOIRE

Access to Education

According to Minister Mabri, the infrastructure of existing schools in Côte d’Ivoire is less than half of what is needed, which has led to President Ouattara to initiate the decentralization of government-funded schools while implementing more digital technology across universities and digitally-offered education.

The government is also paying special attention to building equity in higher education for girls. There is a near gender-balanced opportunity for students attending school, where 40.72% of the student population is comprised of female students. However, in Science-related fields, as with many countries worldwide, there is a need for more gender equity in representation. Only 26.69% of students in science-related fields are female students.

Quality of Higher Education

Teachers are often at the center of the discussion on quality higher education. In fact, Minister Mabri highlighted the quality of teaching skills and ability to effectively achieve their objectives in the classroom as major challenges. With 24 million inhabitants, 42% of which are under the age of 15, there is a growing challenge for Ivorian educators to meet existing and projected education needs. The growth of the workforce requires teachers who are technically skilled, maintain relevant knowledge through research and insight to current trends, and provide relationships and guidance to networks that can lead graduates into an employable
Research and innovation can offer great opportunities for high-quality education, yet the widely-distributed portfolio among various ministries, and other entities, like research centers, outside of government does not lead to coherence, effectiveness or efficiency. This is further exacerbated by weaknesses in the budget allocated. With large student populations continuing to rise, student supervision continues to weaken. Combined with insufficient infrastructure and equipment, teaching and research continue to suffer.

Already a strong economic presence in the region (3rd largest country in ECOWAS, after Nigeria & Ghana), Côte d’Ivoire represents one of the biggest economies in the West African Economic and Monetary Union. The Ivorian government recognizes the importance of workforce development specifically and career-readiness education; to sustain and grow the economic viability of the country. Job security is of high concern to students. Minister Mabri admitted that young Ivorians don’t consider self-employment and entrepreneurship as much of a viable option for them as do students from other West African countries.

This limitation in quality education has led to social unrest being common in Côte d’Ivoire, especially on university campuses where students and lecturers regularly protest against a lack of resources, delayed scholarship payments and research funding, and accommodation issues.

The Ministry of Higher Education has a Directorate of Professional Integration, to serve as an observatory of professional integration to better involve partners, private sectors and institutions. Better alignment of education with the needs of the business community, Minister Mabri offered, will best address issues of employability and professional integration. Given Côte d’Ivoire produces 40% of the world’s cocoa, the government believes this industry is a viable opportunity to support graduating students in promising careers. It is especially important to the national economy and presents a globally competitive opportunity once the processing of cocoa becomes a focus of the technological investments and graduate employment. Many other industries, like Cashew Nuts, Subsoil, Wood, and fishery and marine resources, offer similar opportunities for workforce development, jobs and economic security.

**Student Satisfaction**

Minister Mabri acknowledged that student satisfaction is understandably low, as displayed through the many recent demonstrations held less than a month before the conference. With waning trust in the university system, violence on campus and cessation of classes is also on the rise. The impact of the cycle of teacher strikes leaves less time available for mentoring and training.

President Ouattara has encouraged more social dialogue on campus to discuss the students’ issues. The Minister also shared his desire and intent to resolve major challenges. Minister Mabri accepts responsibility for the students’ inability to focus in class, for example, when the campus’ one restaurant requires students to wait in line up to 2 hours to receive food. And, with the President, he has prioritized improving living conditions as a whole.

The ministry set a 3-year goal to achieve a single academic year for everyone with similar school terms. This would mean the strikes, violence and cessation of classes on campus will need to cease. To achieve this and respond to the concerns of students and of faculty, an investment in university services, catering, cultural services, sports, entertainment, and housing accommodation, improved infrastructure and human resources on campus is also needed.

**Governance & Financing**

Minister Mabri directed the audience’s attention to the role of governance and financing in presenting additional challenges in the current education landscape. Governed by a 1995 law in which the government is required to fully finance public education, Mabri believes this
outdated and insufficient regulation is leading the country to face many more constraints. “We are looking for private investments,” Minister Mabri said, broadening the presentation to ideas for innovative financing. It could support payroll and salaries, teacher training, even bank-issued grants, which Minister Mabri said is being put into place now. He believes with more bank involvement and trust in the education financing system, students will be better supported with guarantees of their fees and confidence will build that the training provided will position them for economic sustainability and work that can help them repay school loans.

THE TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EDUCATION

Minister Mabri reminded participants the government has always invested in National Education and of the highly-respected historical reputation of Ivorian schools. However, the post-election crisis in 2010–2011 greatly impacted education due to wide-spread physical destruction and the extent of reinvestments still required. Government put into place a 10-year plan (2016-2025) which reflects President Ouattara’s vision to revitalize Ivorian education and research systems. It intends to be an important lever for economic development and global competitiveness. Results thus far have been encouraging.

“When President Ouattara went to university, he received a $500 stipend from the national government. Minister Mabri went to university 30 years later and received $600 (in 1995-1997). And those who left 20 years after that have pretty much received the same stipend - about $700. When Minister Mabri’s own term started he asked for a more substantial increase in scholarship money.”

Strategic Area 1: Decentralization of universities
- Rehabilitation/Renovation of university residences and equipment.
- Construction of new residences at the University of Cocody.
- Integration of the internet in university structures.

Strategic Area 2: Strengthening of governance in higher ed and research institutions
- Created a Directorate-General as a national quality assurance authority to ensure better governance
- Institute Performance contracts.

Strategic Area 3: Improvement in quality and relevance in training
- Government sets recruitment of teachers on a regular basis as a goal.
- Digital technology initiative for education delivery and to modernize campus.
- Invest massively in training and quality education, reform & professionalization of curricula.

Strategic Area 4: Organize scientific research to contribute to development
- A Research and Innovation support fund has been set up providing financial aid through scholarships supporting scientific research (PASRES).
Following the successful pilot initiative to include student panelists in SOE 2017, AAI partnered with the Institut National Polytechnique Houphouët-Boigny (INP-HB), a local university in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire to again integrate students and their perspectives in the 4th Annual SOE conference. Seven students were selected to attend the entire conference, participate on the panels, and network with other speakers and invited guests. Many more students were invited to participate in the conference as attendees.

The SOE promoted meaningful dialogue between student panelists and education policy makers. The students’ candid perspectives enhanced the learning experience of many and provided insights into addressing the challenges in Higher Education. As beneficiaries of education sector reforms, it is important to include them as stakeholders in the conversations - a reminder of the pivotal role that students play in enabling successful education reform.

During the conference, students highlighted the relationship between the challenges and opportunities they face. They spoke of the disconnect between a university’s curriculum and the skills demanded by the economy and the shortage of quality faculty. They raised concerns about governance and leadership which has led to strikes on university campuses, and echoed a frustration shared in other parts of the continent, of how the resulting delays greatly challenges them to finish school on time. One student commented that policymakers should find ways to de-politicize the education system and allow students to just learn.

The students also used this platform to recommend stronger international collaboration to raise the quality of education in Africa. They highlighted steps that their peers, educators and governments can take to encourage more young people to appreciate and learn African history, emphasizing the need to support the creation and dissemination of local content.

AAI received positive feedback on the participation of students in the conference. Looking ahead, we will continue to work with local universities and student organizations to identify ways for a systematic engagement with students, to increase their experience at the conference as well as to support them in offering greater contributions contribute to the deliberations.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Dr. Koffi N’Guessan, the Director General of INP-HB, for his valuable partnership with AAI and the SOE in Côte d’Ivoire. Dr. N’Guessan, along with the direct support of the institute’s Human Resources Director, Mrs. Bouadou-Kouadio N’da Kadiatou, paved the way for the participation of INP-HB graduate students throughout the conference.
PATHWAYS TO LIVELIHOOD
The Future of Work: Educating African Youth & Workforce Development kicked off the conference panels looking at the acceleration of technology and proliferation of new industries as they increasingly influence Africa’s development. The panel questioned the extent, scope and economic impact of this change on the future of work and training with a hearty investigation into the role of education itself.

Dr. N’dri Thérèse Assié Lumumba opened the conversation by asking the question of “Education, for what?” For Dr. Lumumba, the Future of Work forces educators at all levels to look beyond the traditional ways of training learners, to factor in the importance of their capacity for creativity, and to challenge them to think of work that exists outside of their expected contexts. The moderator guided the discussion through innovative and effective solutions for a 21st Century education in Africa, such as inclusive policies, harnessing human potential, curriculum as a pathway for social progress, gender, and updating knowledge in science and technology for African education and social transformation.

Dr. Solomon Assefa framed his perspective of the world’s transformation through his role as VP of IBM Research. Contrary to common belief, he noted that technologies like Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), BlockChain Technology, Deep Learning, and Quantum Computing, may seem to have newly surfaced but have taken decades to get to the current point. He challenged the perception that these technologies are ready to replace humans at work. In healthcare as with agriculture, he offered many examples of the complementary ways in which technology is augmenting human work capacity.

Greater investments in time and resources is necessary for Africa to secure a firm reputation in the global technology ecosystem. For example, South Africa’s investment of less than 0.8% of GDP into R&D would need to increase if the country wants to be at the frontier of transforming technology industries and how we operate, rather than just being consumers of it. Rather than African Higher Education systems questioning whether this technology “helps [Africa] to leapfrog or if it leads to deindustrialization before even industrialization happens”, Dr. Assefa adds, if universities teach these technologies to our students it would create entrepreneurs and intellectual properties that are relevant to the local context, and could increase workers’ capacity today. If village healthcare workers are provided with well-designed mobile applications, these applications, Assefa concluded, create more jobs at a time when neither governments nor educators currently have the capacity to train a million doctors in 10 years as the market demands.

MODERATOR: N’Dri Thérèse Assié Lumumba, Ph D, Professor, Cornell University; President, World Council of Comparative Education Societies
Solomon Assefa, Vice President, IBM Research Africa & Emerging Markets Solutions
Nneka Okekearu, Deputy Director, Enterprise Development Centre
Simon Rey, Group Head - Talent, Learning, & Organizational Development, Ecobank
Bob Wekesa, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Associate on the Africa China Reporting Project and Associate for the African Centre for the Study of the U.S, University of the Witwatersrand
Kanga N’Guessan Anna Christelle, Masters student at INP-HB

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Mrs. Nneka Okekearu broadened discussions on the need for entrepreneurship training, as the Enterprise Development Centre at Pan-Atlantic University has run programs where they unlock and transform the mindset of youth through business, leadership and management education. They fill a much-needed gap in a system where the curriculum often is preparing students for careers that don’t exist when they graduate. Now as part of the university’s first undergraduate program, students are required to take one year of entrepreneurship, receiving mentorship and training as they start, run and liquidate a business within that time-frame. Notably, the university sees that students do better in their grades because they get life-skills and application with the theory that other courses are teaching. The university believes the students can use their education to solve problems on the continent. The need for a more structured internship process that fits the African context is also a concern of Mrs. Okekearu. Mentoring and continuous learning are seen as stopgaps to ensure workers are professional and remain relevant.

Mr. Simon Rey represented the education and learning functions within Ecobank and for the 16,000 external corporate clients across 36 African countries they serve annually. As a strategy to make continuous learning feasible for existing employees, Mr. Rey encouraged businesses to hire young people in their corporations, where they can share the knowledge they have about relevant technologies and social contexts. He asserted that, 30% of what workers know today has the potential to become irrelevant within 3 months, which means training needs to happen 3-4 times a year. And though many workers might opt for a bonus of $1,000 a year, the potential of that money being invested in growing the staff’s capacity can reap larger benefits. Mr. Rey encouraged other corporations to partner with education and not leave the responsibility to governments. Being a young continent is a good thing that should be embraced. “We can achieve much more if we collaborate,” he concluded.

Dr. Bob Wekesa, Lecturer at Wits University, chimed in with the need for Africans to promote Africa-to-Africa exchanges. Without these, Africans will be propelled to continually look externally to validate its own knowledge systems. Rather than grow into a nationalist ecosystem, universities can offer these exchanges to faculty as well. He called on the Ministers of Education to consider offering a limited number of scholarships which can be matched by organizations like AAI or the British Council.

Our student panelist, Anna Christelle, studying Agronomy at INP-HB, acknowledged that she and her peers were seeking formal education to connect the supply in the demand. Ms. Christelle recalled when INP-HB entered into partnership with Orange Côte d’Ivoire to create a master’s program on Data Science. The program addressed the skills mismatch and offered more employment opportunities directly employing graduates from that program. Ms. Christelle postulated that entrepreneurship cultivated the spirit of fellow students to continue to become job creators and contribute to the development of the continent. Ms. Christelle challenged educators to better integrate young people into the education they receive through experiential learning. And, she encouraged country governments to invest more resources into research, especially in the coffee sector, which at the same time helped to grow the economy of Côte d’Ivoire. Then, innovation and solutions can be marketed or promoted to other countries facing similar conditions, gaining additional revenue.

**KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED**

1. **Accessing Education Systems:** The search for new interfaces for innovation in science and technology serves as a means of greater access to new distribution systems and in information technology;

2. **More Innovative Working Environments:** The appropriation and exposure of a creative mentality to innovation instead of consumption;

3. **Promote an Internship Culture:** Internships lead students through a better adaptation to the world of work, and provides continuous learning to ensure the relevance of training profiles in the face of rapid changes in the world of work and the expected profiles.
MINISTERIAL PANEL: COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION

MODERATOR: Kofi Appenteng, President, Africa America Institute
Honorable Minister Dr. Albert Abdallah Toikeusse Mabri, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire
Honorable Minister Professor Alkassoum Maïga, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation of the Republic of Burkina Faso
Honorable Minister Professor Kwesi Yankah, Minister of State, Tertiary Education of the Republic of Ghana
Dr. Amadou Abdoul Sow, Director General, Ministry of Higher Education of the Republic of Senegal
Dr. Amadou Ouane, Technical Expert, Ministry of Higher Education of the Republic of Mali

Education has long been recognized by global policymakers as essential for countries to achieve economic development. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global framework for achieving global prosperity by 2030, has one dedicated goal (SDG4) for education, an important pillar for all countries to achieve all the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). The importance of education has also been recognized at the continental level with, the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, a long-term strategic framework for the transformation of the African continent which highlights the importance for Africa’s youth to have full access to education, training, skills, technology, and to all resources necessary to realize their full potential.

The panel, moderated by AAI President Kofi Appenteng, assembled three Ministers in charge of Higher Education from Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Burkina Faso and high-level representatives from the Ministries of Higher Education of Senegal and of Mali. A more detailed analysis of Higher Education in Côte d’Ivoire can be found on page 20. As of 2018, not a single Western and Central African university was featured in the rankings of the world’s best 500 academic institutions – a statistic our panelists look to change through reforms they are implementing in line with each countries’ development needs.

HIGHLIGHTS

The panelists referred to the frequent closure of universities due to the demonstrations by students and teachers, as a chronic issue. They agreed that students’ grievances and teachers’ demands should be taken seriously by establishing clear mechanisms to address their concerns.

In Mali, the government established a High Council for Social Dialogue and hired mediators to engage both teachers and students. Mali is also taking steps to modernize their registration system and was able to confirm 68,000 registered students instead of the 108,000 originally reported.

ICT integration goes beyond easing the delivery of students’ services. In Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, virtual universities are a cost-effective solution to the overcrowded universities. The government of Senegal passed a decree recognizing the degrees attained through online distance learning.

In discussing university governance reforms, panelists highlighted that Higher Education in Africa was traditionally offered by public institutions which were funded, managed and controlled by governments. With limited public resources and the rise of private education, several reforms were initiated to harmonize

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the governance system across all universities and provide a better mechanism to diversify programs to improve the quality of learning. Professor Amadou Abdoul Sow, Director General in the Ministry of Higher Education of Senegal referred to new guidelines that his government was implementing to recruit qualified rectors, expanding the applicant pool to also include Senegalese living abroad.

Professor Kwesi Yankah, Minister of State for Tertiary Education of the Republic of Ghana explained that the reform of universities extended to amending the laws governing private universities. Private universities had to operate under the tutelage of a public university for 10 years, before they could grant degrees and had to pay 25% of corporate tax. Both measures were eliminated to allow private universities to grow. The government of Ghana also merged two governing accreditation boards into the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission to ensure that both private and public universities operate under the same conditions and that degrees received from either institution were equally recognized.

The panelists further tackled the shortage of African graduates with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) degrees. African governments have taken note of the urgency to invest in STEM, with many of them taking the steps to restructure their ministries of education to add Scientific Research and Innovation under the umbrella of Higher Education. In Senegal, the Ministry of Higher Education organized national consultations on the future of Higher Education and among the recommendations included a proposal to add more short-term STEM programs to offer students more flexibility. Minister Alkassoum Maiga, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Burkina Faso shared that his country established a National Center for Scientific Research and Technology, which has been successful thus far in generating new technologies.

Higher Education in Africa faces severe constraints in terms of attaining a critical mass of quality faculty. The Global Partnership for Education estimates that the university staff with PhDs in public higher education institutions in Africa is estimated to be less than 20%. This prevents departments and universities from being able to provide relevant higher education training and to establish vibrant research environments that attract and retain the best qualified faculty. Despite comprising 12.5% of the world’s population, Africa accounts for less than 1 percent of global research output. In the case of Mali, Dr. Amadou Ouane indicated that his government allocates 0.02% of tax revenues to a research fund. Dr. Amadou Sow of Senegal shared some of the policies that his Ministries is implementing to attract more faculty. They have established a scholarship to encourage more women to pursue teaching. They also changed the teachers’ retirement policy, allowing for retired teachers to receive 85% of their salaries instead of 26% and creating room for promotion of junior faculty.

KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED

1. **Regional collaboration:** The discussion among West African Ministers of Higher Education and Senior representatives revealed that most governments face similar challenges in transforming their Higher Education. A long term and more sustainable solution may include regional collaboration to tackle these shared challenges and promote economic growth.

2. **Effective rebranding highlights strong pathways to livelihood:** Some countries as Ghana are rebranding their TVET programs as an attractive alternative path to gain practical skills. By creating a clear pipeline of students from high-school to technical schools can address the unemployment rate and resolve the substantial shortage of skilled labor.

3. **Greater investment needed in STEM:** Low graduation percentages of Africans in STEM fields necessitates a curriculum reform. According to UNESCO Science Report: Towards 2030, Africa’s research output rose to 33,300 publications in 2014, however most of the research concentrated in life sciences and agriculture and little is produced on technology, mathematics and engineering.
COLLECTIVE IMPACT: TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution continues to transform global societies, African companies and governments will have to collectively brainstorm how to increase the educational capacity of Africa’s burgeoning youth population in order to meet global demands.

According to a 2018 World Economic Forum report, “these transformations, if managed wisely, could lead to a new age of good work, good jobs and improved quality of life for all, but, if managed poorly, pose the risk of widening skills gap, greater inequality, and broader polarization.” It is the underlying premise that, for ‘good work’ and ‘good jobs’ to happen, a transformation in Africa’s higher education system must first occur. This was the basis for the panel on Collective Impact: Transforming Higher Education in Africa.

Panel moderator Lawalley Cole broadly mapped the history of the higher education system in Africa post-independence, highlighted trends and recurring problems within Africa’s higher education system, and suggested steps to transformation needed for African universities to compete globally. He then asked panelists, “To what extent is higher education a driver for sustainable development in a national and international context?”

“National systems are important, but if you want to be globally competitive in the market, you must look global. It was the Ghanaians that first led this effort,” said Himdat Bayusuf, Team Lead for the World Bank. In 2017, the University of Ghana was one of sixteen universities awarded accreditation from the Royal Society of Biology. “The result[s] that have the biggest financing are those that partner with other international universities. You only receive the funding when you achieve those results. [The World Bank] provides 10% of the funding upfront,” says Bayusuf. She also noted the trend in investments made by governments in higher education across the continent, in addition to Ghana, in countries such as Sénégal, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and Uganda.

In July 2018, the World Bank approved a $70 million grant in support of Burkina Faso’s Higher Education Project, which will help strengthen higher education institutions to increase access and deliver quality education in priority subject areas, namely the science, technology, engineering, math, and innovation fields. Bayusuf also noted the indicators the World Bank looks form in terms of funding: post-graduate expansion—which prioritizes producing more Master’s and PhD graduates within the key topical areas (science, technology, engineering, and math); and the creation of robust graduate programs, which will inadvertently yield to more intra-African/regional cooperation.
In addition to the cultivation of international partnerships, African universities must also undergo a critical transformation in pedagogy. AAI’s Pathways for Livelihood pillar acknowledges the role pedagogy plays in youth training and development as part of its active role in teacher training. Beatrice Muganda, Director of Higher Education for the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR), discussed the ways in which learners and learning are changing in the 21st century. “Pedal [The Partnership for Pedagogy for African Leadership, a PASAR initiative] will transform a lecturer to a knowledge facilitator and make students co-creators of knowledge. We must embrace technology in Africa to enhance learning outcomes and improve interactions in the learning spaces.”

Dr. Saliou Touré, President of the International University of Grand Bassam (IUGB), gave an overview of the history of the Ivorian higher education system post-independence and the country’s plans to meet global objectives concerning higher education and sustainability. IUGB was founded in 2005, and is a private, publicly supported institution established within the framework of a public-private partnership; its curriculum is modeled after American universities.

The history of IUGB’s success began in the early 1990s when Côte d’Ivoire began to explore ways to reform and improve its higher education system. In 1998, “Project Link” was established with Georgia State University (GSU) (USA). The purpose of “Project Link” was to facilitate faculty and student exchange, in addition to teacher training, and to enhance academic programs in business, human resources development and education. “Project Link” served as the impetus for the establishment of several important relationships with higher education institutions in Côte d’Ivoire such as Ecole Normale Superiere, the National University of Cocody, and the National Polytechnic Institute.

To build upon the success of “Project Link”, Côte d’Ivoire signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish an international university in Côte d’Ivoire modeled on an American-style education. In 2004, GSU and the Agency for Education and Development (AED), a non-governmental organization in Côte d’Ivoire, raised funds to establish the Côte d’Ivoire/Georgia State University partnership. Since then, IUGB has also formed partnerships with the University of Houston and the University of Alabama Birmingham.

IUGB’s success in funding lies in creating transnational partnerships with universities. This not only derives from an economic advantage, but the need for IUGB and, more widely, Côte d’Ivoire to distinguish itself from other universities on the continent. By cultivating a university brand that is globally recognized —also internationally accredited—students from across the continent see value, yielding higher prospects.

**KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED**

1. **African Higher Education Institutions must present distinct sustainability models to receive international funding.** They can improve sustainability through curriculum development, students ability to learn, and contributions to overall national development. Universities who show adept capabilities in science, technology, engineering, and math receive adequate funding from institutions. Additionally, research in agriculture science is also another viable means for funding.

2. **Pedagogy must evolve to adapt with societal trends to remain relevant.** Utilizing technology in the classroom is critical to lessening the skills gap in Africa. Universities must transform the classroom experience by cultivating new ways to engage students.

3. **International partnerships drive sustainability.** African universities which forge partnerships with international universities and funding agencies show sustainable growth. These partnerships can result in international accreditation and brand recognition, along with access to more resources to teach students.
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES: TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA: THE PROMISE AND CHALLENGES OF COLLABORATION

At a pre-conference convening, Dr. Phillip Clay with assistance from AAI brought together 35 stakeholders who believed that considerable advancement in transforming higher education in Africa could be made by focusing on effective collaboration. The conclusion of the group is that if the stakeholders would work together, they can expand their work and its impact at scale.

Dr. Clay first provided some examples of his experiences as the former chancellor at MIT, and the university’s historical role and commitment to international education, in India, Mexico, Singapore, the Middle East and Europe. He then shared how he framed the pre-conference session with two guiding questions:

1. What does a successful education initiative look like in Africa?
2. What strategy & governance will have long-term benefits going forward?

Attendees of the pre-conference convenings shared overviews of the work of their organizations which included both African and international organizations, development agencies, universities and philanthropic entities. Some focused on the current state of African faculty and their capacity-building needs; the appropriate strategy, resources, and governance needed; how research-intensive universities in Africa are funded. Others, like Arizona State University, spoke about the desire to do more partnering with African Universities, while The Harvard Center for African Studies shared how they are working directly through their new office based on the continent. Attendees also spoke of challenges they are facing in making university accessible to more students, reconfiguring the university model to integrate indigenous knowledge systems, the need for a more well-trained workforce, funding missteps and programming with new, more informed plans for investing in human capital development.

The convening covered issues of relevancy in approaches to education, culturally, preparing the next generation of leaders and skilled workers, and to be in an advanced position to continue training students for the future. It also explored the education eco-system through the perspectives of gender inequality, economic development, community development, engagement and investment. Attendees acknowledged that governance was a challenge to achieving long-term benefits, with expressed concerns that leadership selection and actionable policy is too heavily impacted or hindered by government. This led to an exploratory discussion on resources, first questioning how to appeal to government as funders while diversifying funding sources to include more private sector, diaspora community members and “long-term wins”. Some final thought-provoking statements were made on the bias and relationship some have to culture, which should be valued as currency, capitalized on by its creators, yet not monumentalized to restrict or limit its use or evolution.

Two breakout sessions were conducted where attendees had debated on the barriers preventing the transformation of Higher Education in Africa and actionable items that could be created to address the most significant. Attendees agreed that deep
changes are needed at universities in order to improve the overall quality of African universities’ programs and curricula. They suggest projecting where universities would be in 15 years would help to define transformation required on the continent and lead them to focus on the skills graduates need to be employable. Financing of African universities to be more competitive is a major concern. Further, the participants agreed that in the future, skills in science, data analysis and climate change would be needed; however, so far, Africa has been either a recipient or a consumer of technology, not a producer of research. Discussions of teachers’ capacities was a key issue and went beyond direct academic training to their infrequency in addressing emotional intelligence and mental issues.

There was frank discussion on possible solutions to removing critical barriers. This list included developing more technical capacity; creating a business model to help youth find pathways to livelihood; adopting a holistic approach from basic education to higher education, including social innovations and values; and in fundraising through alumni engagement. The group suggested that “Centers of Excellence” be developed to work on specific African issues and serve as research institutions that will help African people navigate in the world in 30 years.

Dr. Olaf Hahn of ESSA participated in the convening and shared some of his experience in discussing lessons and barriers to transforming higher education. Hahn found the convening of people from different jurisdictions, inside and outside of Africa, some with strong teaching experience over many years, middle management, senior management, etc. to discuss what works to be quite encouraging. The group which worked in a condensed fashion (1-hour discussion) came up with a lot of ideas and input. The key experience for Hahn was that “if you bring these kinds of people together in a meaningful way, the robustness of experiences manifest in concrete suggestions out of many countries, at various levels of realities can motivate people to go further.”

Hahn acknowledged there is a real desire amongst the group to go beyond individual engagement and project-centered investments. He highlighted a suggestion that given the same ideas come up repeatedly, the group wishes to at least be informed about what is going on, while gathering information on what has already been implemented.

The pre-conference group was left to think on a key question – “If you had a billion dollars tomorrow to invest in higher education over 10 years what would you do?” A dean of a South African university responded that the amount cover stipends and fellowships over a few years, giving a clearer sense of the magnitude of the issues and barriers to face, including securing adequate resources.

Dr. Clay closed the recap by acknowledging the private sector participation from IBM, Microsoft, GE, Google and Bloomberg at the convening, and summarized the group’s next steps. These companies and others have a personal and urgent interest to increase the capacity on the continent and to find partners to do the work. Microsoft & IBM have created substitutes for the partner institutions that don’t exist. In the U.S., they would go to a university. But because they don’t feel they can find that in Africa, they have created their own entities, which while has some benefit is not ideal for a company to operate in the education field.

Dr. Clay indicated the participants and others who were unable to join would be asked to make some suggestions for next steps to proceed with an initiative that is collaborative and will involve simultaneous, consistent investment on the parts of all stakeholders. AAI has agreed to be the Secretariat for this initiative and agreed to help figure out the next steps.
Nigeria is Africa’s top oil producer and the World’s sixth exporter of crude oil. Most of the country’s oil and gas reserves are in the “Niger Delta” region, which is located on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. 80 percent of the government’s revenue comes from the oil and petroleum sector and generates over 40 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Niger Delta region is therefore an important strategic region for the economic prosperity of the country. However, the region has been engulfed in protracted conflicts stemming from the discontent of local communities with the slow economic development of the region and the environmental degradation caused by oil spillages and gas flaring. In 2000, former President Olusegun Obasanjo created the Niger Delta Development Commission, a federal government agency to develop the region with key infrastructure projects and to train and educate the youth. The Niger Delta Development Commission partnered with several organizations, local and national, to implement its projects.

One of the Commission’s implementing partners is the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) a local non-profit organization established in 2010 with funding from Chevron Corporation, to build partnerships for peace and equitable economic development in the Niger Delta. PIND collaborates with a range of actors, from government agencies, private companies, and foundations to support a range of socio-economic programs with the overarching goal of improving the standards of communities in the Niger Delta.

A conversation between Brian McGinley, Vice President of AAI, and Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima, Program Officer at the Ford Foundation reflected on how to develop a successful workforce model based on the Ford Foundation’s work with the Niger Delta Youth Employment Project (NDEYP). NDEYP is a PIND project funded by Ford Foundation which provides young people with pathways to gainful employment.

IDENTIFYING SECTOR SKILLS NEEDS

Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima acknowledged that the development of a skills program depends on accurate supply and demand data, reliable research, labor market forecasts and an effective way to identify the critical skills needed. The Ford Foundation relied on an assessment of the current and future skills needed in the Niger Delta and the ability of the existing market to absorb them before developing the NDEYP project. The study forced the Foundation to look at three main economic sectors: Agriculture, ICT and Construction, to identify the critical skills needed in the short and long term and concluded that the private sector lacked the capacity to absorb recent graduates. Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima commented that skills training programs should incorporate entrepreneurial skills and business competencies to offer alternative pathways to sustainable livelihoods.

ALIGNING SKILLS PROGRAMS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Policy alignment within the national skills development system is critical to forecast future skills needed and to
build skills development programs with maximum impact. In many African countries, governments establish national development plans (NDPs) which offer long term perspectives and a vision of where the country wants to go and where large-scale investments will be. Mr. Mac-Ikemenjima added that governments will always need skills development programs. Yet, they need to determine which are the skills that are critical and scarce and to build a model that is aligned with the country’s vision.

BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL
One of the challenges many organizations experience with youth-focused programs is the availability of resources to sustain the program. The activities of PIND are mainly supported by Chevron and there are plans in place to diversify the financing for the projects. The Niger Delta region is home to many multinational oil companies with their own Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budgets. Mr. Mac-Ikemenjima shared that there are plans to organize a donor conference comprised of all the oil companies in the region, to see how they can channel their CSR into one pool fund that would support activities and projects in the Niger Delta for the next 10 years. The intention is to leverage resources from oil companies in the region, who would benefit from the creation of jobs, economic growth and stability in the region. If successful, this could be a model that state governments can use.

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SYSTEM
To better respond to the local needs, it is critical to develop an inclusive process, to get valuable inputs from all stakeholders. The NDYEP project created an ecosystem to support its mission. An advisory council composed of government representatives, regulatory bodies, young people, skills training programs, and private sector was established, to identify employers who could absorb young people and to identify training institutions.
According to the UN, Africa is estimated to add a workforce of about 1 billion Africans by 2050, an increase in the continent’s share of the global workforce from 12 to 23 percent, the largest share in the world. With 10 million young people entering the labor force every year, youth will make up a large percentage of this. These demographic realities can unleash new economic possibilities if properly channeled. AAI’s own Pathways to Livelihood strategy seeks to galvanize partnerships around skills-building interventions and build human capital that would allow young people in Africa to prosper. During the panel, “Tipping the education scale through demand driven skills development,” we explored innovative education and training programs to increase access to education and improve workforce readiness.

Panel moderator, Ms. Khady Dior Ndiaye, CEO of West and Central Africa for Citibank, contextualized the conversation by indicating that Côte d’Ivoire has about 100,000 young people yearly who are college ready but do not go to school due to lack of space in universities. Despite the country’s plan of adding 10 more universities by the year 2025, one must think of other innovative programs in the meantime to reach these students and to provide them with employable skills. Panelists were asked to describe what types of training and education programs serve as models for scale across the continent in response, and to discuss the roles all stakeholders have in building a competitive learning environment.

Dr. Koffi N’Guessan, Director of the Institute of National Polytechnique of Houphouët-Boigny (INP-HB), emphasized the importance of partnerships between higher education institutions and the private sector to optimize the country’s skills supply. INP-HB created a committee of key private and public stakeholders in Côte d’Ivoire to collaborate on training and skills that the market needs. Several programs at the INP-HB have developed from this dialogue including the creation of the Graduate Program on Data Science, a partnership between Orange Telecommunications and the university.

The panel acknowledged that new skills and technological advances will continue to revolutionize and transform what employers are looking for. The Social Innovation Director at IE University, Dr. Concepción Galdón explained they use social innovation tools in all programs to create business graduates with an understanding of the social and environmental impact of their work on global societies. “When we imprint social innovation content in our programs, we build a person while we teach the skills” said Dr. Concepción Galdón. They consistently observe that students choosing capstone projects prefer to work with NGOs or smaller firms that are addressing global challenges in the end, the value created is not only to the individual himself but also to society.
Emmanuel Nsadha, an AAI alumnus and current PhD candidate in Mathematics at Syracuse University, spoke of the need to encourage integration of technology into teaching at the high school level. Emmanuel Nsadha is a beneficiary of one the AAI-EADB STEM Graduate Programs established in 2015 in partnership with the East African Development Bank. The teacher training program seeks to increase the quality of STEM education in East Africa by investing in advanced professional training of STEM teachers/lecturers at public high schools. While the use of technology in classrooms is still scarce, Mr. Nsadha recommends integrating technology into the classroom lessons to change the way students absorb the material. The goal is to engage the students to improve their performance by teaching creatively.

As a powerful force in accelerating growth of African economies, the panelists called for more attention on the skills needed for the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Amy Fanny-Tognisso, the Investment Director for Entrepreneurial Solutions Partners works closely with SMEs particularly in Côte d’Ivoire and indicated that a lack of skilled workers, especially along the value chain, prevents many SMEs from entering agricultural sectors such as cocoa and cashew nuts, where Côte d’Ivoire is the top world exporter. “We first need to recognize that those careers are as important and valuable as the careers obtained through conventional degree programs.” Amy Fanny-Tognisso stated.

The African Development Bank views agriculture as a viable potential source of employment. However, the panelists acknowledged that the sector has very limited success in generating gainfully rewarding employment for young people. “We need to confront the inequity in how value is distributed along the value chain in order to attract young people to those careers” stated William Egbe, Board Trustee at the Jacobs Foundation. Mr. Egbe highlighted the current value given to farmers is less than what others on the value chain receive, yet believes “Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana have the ability to force those conversations with industries, [and] to force a redistribution of value created to attract young people.”

Panelists stressed the importance to vocational and technical trainings with formalized apprenticeships as an alternative path to employment. In fact, according to the International Trade Centre Report on Promoting SME competitiveness in Africa, “African youth tend to choose apprenticeships over classroom settings when given the choice.” Amy Fanny-Tognisso shared that the Swiss model provides a clear pipeline for talented young professionals who make 22% more than their peers after they enter the market, leading to only 2% unemployment in the country. Mrs. Fanny-Tognisso believes this model can be replicated anywhere in Africa, especially for SMEs which need competent workers to contribute to their growth.

The “Second Chance” model offered at INP-HB provides an opportunity to recent graduates to learn new skills in under-employed sectors. Dr. N’Guessan believes this program has the potential to gradually reduce the unemployment rate in Côte d’Ivoire.

**KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED**

1. **Investing in the human capital of SMEs.** The potential of SMEs to create jobs for the 1.3 billion new entrants to the African economy can be realized if smart investments are prioritized to help create a pipeline for skilled workers.

2. **Embracing Social innovation as a learning tool.** Combining direct knowledge while building human empathy creates powerful learning experiences for graduates to become socially-conscious citizens. Blended learning models can provide an effective and more flexible alternative learning method for African higher education.

3. **Investing in teachers to prepare the future workforce.** Teacher training programs have the potential to contribute to the achievements of Sustainable Development Goal #4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and especially target 4.c which focuses on increasing the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries.
African Epistemologies: Histories and Futures through African Agency

Panel moderator Felicia Appenteng is the Chair of the IE Africa Center in Madrid, Spain. The mission of the IE Africa Center is to revolutionize the way African business and culture are taught across higher education institutions. Ms. Appenteng opened the discussion asking panellists to look at the relevancy of higher education within a 21st-century context.

Dr. Chinwe Effiong, Assistant Dean of Global Youth Advancement at Michigan State University, believes “higher education is about social and human development, the key word being development. Even though we are dealing with more complex issues today than when universities were first started, the consistent theme [looks at] how are the activities the university is doing impacting the communities around them?” Dr. Effiong noted the educational motivations of some of Africa’s early leaders such as Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, and Félix Houphouët-Boigny to demonstrate that students at that time had a firm understanding of why they were in the United States, France, or Great Britain. Their purpose, she explains, was to learn and apply the knowledge back in their home countries to solve developmental challenges.

Ms. Appenteng probed more into the premise of ‘purpose-centered’ education by asking Y. Obenewa Ampoah, Executive Director of the Harvard University Center for African Studies, how STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) finds relevance in these discussions. Ms. Ampoah argues “too often when we speak of innovation, we usually see it from the perspective of STEM. More recently, people are realizing soft skills are important as well, which is why we added the arts component.” While innovation is important and allows for various development opportunities, she stresses that understanding the type of innovation and the ways in which innovation is conducted is also important.

To define Afrocentrism and identifying shared values throughout the continent, Dr. Effiong calls attention to the African philosophy of ubuntu, which means ‘I am because we are’. Dr. Effiong juxtaposes ubuntu with French philosopher René Descartes’ philosophy, ‘I think therefore I am’ by explaining the former is not merely the philosophy of thought, but also a philosophy of action. Ubuntu is the idea that there is a collective call to action and it’s not enough to have a philosophical thought where we feel good about each other if we’re not taking action to do something about it.
Ms. Amponsah expounds with her perspective on ubuntu’s meaning in a contemporary context. She highlights tradition, cultures, and values are not stagnant, and poses the question, “How do we make sure our values evolve to reflect who we are at this particular moment in time? Part of ubuntu is to evolve with the times.”

A possible contemporary ubuntu theme can be seen through the rise of positive social impact initiatives in some universities, which is also trending in Africa. “The Future of Higher Education is Social Impact,” published in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, looks argues that leveraging the talent and knowledge of university faculty to apply their value to a broader audience for positive social impact can reverse scepticism surrounding the value of higher education. Ms. Amponsah and Adam Gamoran, the article’s author, note while some projects, like the World Bank’s Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence project, promote regional specialization among participating universities in areas that address regional challenges, in addition to strengthening the capacities of these universities to deliver quality training and applied research, they still tend to focus more on the application of the hard sciences (STEM) to solve development challenges instead of integrating the social sciences and humanities.

Dr. Ousseina Alidou, Professor of Africa, Middle Eastern, and South Asian Languages and Literatures at Rutgers University, cites the role women in the Sahel played in defining indigenous cultures, although they are often omitted from history. “When we talk about education, not schooling, there are older ways of educational framework/paradigms that draw from indigenous knowledge systems. African women are central to the transmission of indigenous epistemologies and indigenous knowledge systems.”

Unfortunately, there is little research, produced in the last ten years from international organizations, concerning knowledge systems and the transmission of indigenous knowledge in Africa. Dr. Alidou, who is also a strong advocate for teaching indigenous languages in African universities, says the majority of African women still do not have access to formal knowledge systems. “The knowledge systems that are operating outside of the Western Academy need to be integrated,” says Alidou.

Honourable Minister of State for Tertiary Education in Ghana, Kwesi Yankah, noted “Knowledge that does not exist globally is knowledge that does not exist, and so it can be plagiarized. If it is not accessed by the global village, it does not exist. Western scholars can come and read materials in our libraries, but what is the reliable publishing house of African knowledge? Africa must find ways to promote itself.”

The panelists’ sentiments regarding the value of African scholarship is the impetus for AAI’s Africa Illuminated, which aims to challenge monolithic and anachronistic narratives about Africa through the dissemination and advocation for content that shifts and promotes new narratives about Africa.

**KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED**

1. **An African Integrated Education.** African indigenous methods and practices are diverse and vast, as they originated to serve specific populations and geographies. Universities should partner with indigenous knowledge processors to retain these systems for future generations. Integrating African epistemologies into university curriculum can support and strengthen national development.

2. **The value of STEAM Education in Africa.** African universities must consider the ways in which STEAM will help to creatively employ new strategies for solving country challenges.

3. **Representation Matters.** African students benefit from seeing their likeness, customs, traditions and values reflected in curriculum.
SPECIAL PRESENTATION: TRECC
(TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN CACAO COMMUNITIES)

The Jacobs Foundation and their TRECC program joined the 2018 State of Education in Africa conference as a sponsor and invited presenter to discuss the TRECC case study in building an ecosystem to transform education in Côte d’Ivoire. TRECC’s mission is to improve the living conditions of all children and youth in Côte d’Ivoire through high-quality education. TRECC targets the needs of children in Cacao communities from 0-24 years of age. Their programming and commitments aim to support the development and scaling of high-quality education initiatives in three thematic areas: Quality parenting and early childhood development programs; Effective approaches to enhancing literacy and numeracy skills; Relevant technical & vocational education and training opportunities for rural youth.

The TRECC program is supportive of national Higher Education transformation. It builds partnerships with government, private sector organizations comprising the cacao industry, and other entities which serve to benefit the viability of the workers and families directly impacted. TRECC presenters began by drawing attention to children’s well-being statistics in communities across Côte d’Ivoire. Through selected indicators, Sabina Vigani, Country Director for the TRECC program revealed some of the difficulties children face in accessing, attending and successfully completing primary and secondary education.

Many statistics show that more children are in school, but Ms. Vigani points to further evidence that the children are not learning. According to a 2012 Brookings report, “Africa’s Education Crisis,” this eventually leads to high dropout rates. The 2017 Côte d’Ivoire national education evaluation at the US equivalent of Grade 2 showed 15.4% of children achieved the expected level of proficiency and 11.8% achieved the minimum level of proficiency in French, a measure of learning in the country. At this same stage of education, 49.6% of students show signs of major learning difficulties. UNESCO reports during the same year are showing that 88% of children in primary and lower secondary school across Sub-Saharan Africa do not reach minimum proficiency levels in reading.

Ms. Vigani details TRECC’s plans to nationally promote and administer programs to provide schooling across Côte d’Ivoire to combat these statistics and bring awareness across the Cacao industry to the important role of educating children in cacao-producing communities. By working with the government of Côte d’Ivoire, TRECC believes their initiatives will continue to strengthen policy that impacts education in targeted communities. TRECC promotes the application of scientific evidence in public policy and outline a research training and mentoring program that will support more trained researchers and further increase enforcement capacities. TRECC has signed on to the government’s National Development Plan and will cooperate to reach its objectives for education. As a proponent for Technical and Vocational training, TRECC also supports adapting successful models for rural areas.

Sabina Vigani, Country Director, Jacobs Foundation
Lise Birikundavyi, Investment Manager & Deputy Country Director, TRECC
Sosthène Guei, Researcher, TRECC

www.soeafrica.org/2018-video-library/soe2018trecc
www.soeafrica.org/soe2018trecc-presentation
Research training and mentoring supports studies on youth and child development in cocoa communities. At the same time, TRECC has prioritized scientific capacity building initiatives for Ivorian researchers to producing solid evidence aligning with quality education and rural livelihoods, that will be useful to governments, industry, civil society, and educators. TRECC wants to scale this program with a targeted reach of 30 Masters & PhD students. With this increased focus, TRECC seeks to provide relevant evidence to decision-makers and strives to be an extended Research & Development arm for the government.

TRECC uses Impact Financing to support its programs and the public sector, which does not have the capital to address the issues which exist. Lise Birikundavyi, TRECC Deputy Director, explains how TRECC is able to engage with other foundations and private sector entities for investments, identifying those organizations willing to use venture capital tools for both financial and social returns. The investments take on many forms including local impact funds, regional education funds and direct investments in education entrepreneurs. TRECC invests in other EdTech companies, supports innovative and start-up social enterprises and catalyzed innovative financing for other stakeholders. These investments benefit commercial organizations with improved communication and relationship with local communities, and opportunities to evaluate the usefulness for them as end-users. It also supports the industry, by ensuring that training and right-level education for youth will better prepare future farmers and workers.

For TRECC, these efforts also work to combat the negative impact of Child Labor across the Cacao industry. TRECC instituted a grant-matching mechanism to provide a multi-sector nutrition program, bridging classes from primary to secondary, and youth capacity building classes in financial education, entrepreneurship and life skills, along with parenting skills training. The matching mechanism selects evidence-based education projects that international NGOs and cocoa companies can implement in cocoa communities. TRECC advocates that corporate partners integrate the interventions into their sustainability strategy. As Ms. Vigani points out the usual argument that children should be in school doesn’t face the realities of children who remain vulnerable when there is no school available or they are not learning even when one is.
Some of the most impactful methods of education and information transfer occur through Arts and Culture. This panel of progressive and prolific artists and culturalists explores the world in which arts and culture are upheld as language for representation and in knowledge production. Dr. Ousseina Alidou invites the audience to consider along with ministers of education, labor, finance, culture & tourism the question of addressing youth employment in Africa by looking at the creative industries. Citing a few social leaders and cultural advocates, Dr. Alidou positions the importance and role of culture in development with the responsibility of placing Africa in the world.

Three artists were included on the panel: Sarah Diouf, Karine Jones, and Franck Abd-Bakar Fanny. Dr. Alidou invited them to discuss their role in a creative industry and how it generates youth employment, and how the continent and African diaspora is branding Africa through arts & culture.

Sarah Diouf, based in Dakar, Senegal, is Owner and Designer at Tongoro Studio. The brand was launched to become the first fashion brand to be developed 100% with a Made in Africa label based on the global fast fashion e-commerce model. Ms. Diouf started with a reflection on Identity, which she claimed as the most important currency over time. The goal of Tongoro is to promote a new narrative of Africa through a visual narrative to change the perception of the quality and ability of an African brand to thrive globally.

Ms. Diouf recognized her ability to go to business school to learn marketing, finance and other skills helped her business and creativity to flourish. Higher education’s response to youth unemployment has little to do with the middle class. “[The issue] touches the young people who are sitting on the corner selling cashews, washing car windows at the light or helping you park your car at the hotel.” Tongoro was able to offer short-term training to increase the skills and capacity of the four tailors hired.

“Africa is full of talent and whether it is with entertainment, gastronomy, fashion or health, the creative economy opens new pathways for development and economic diversification,“

- Lala Aicha Ben Barka, Assistant Director-General for UNESCO’s Africa Department
Karine Jones, based in London, is Owner and Fashion Stylist at Aesthetic Candy. Ms. Jones learned the foundations for styling when studying product design development for fashion, but, styling itself wasn’t part of the curriculum. And, “to set up [her] business, [she] had to rely on other skills to learn how to network and collaborate.” She walked the audience through several experiences that her formal education did not prepare her for including managing perceptions of being a black person in the industry, before Virgil Abloh, Artistic Director of Louis Vuitton, and Edward Enninful, editor of British Vogue, were recognized names.

Ms. Jones also spoke on how she learned to build an external team of partners to bring together the skill-sets she needed to do great work. She also makes it a point to include interns in her productions and highlights new and emerging designers in her styling work, as a way of exposure but also informal industry education. Aesthetic Candy clients reach as far as other countries where Ms. Jones may be the first person of African-descent they have worked with to the likes of the choir for the 2018 Royal Wedding of Britain’s Prince Harry to Meghan Markle.

Ivorian artist Franck Abd-Bakar Fanny spoke of varied career experiences with corporations like Atlantic Telecom, CelTel and Coca-Cola before he became a self-taught artist. His creative works include photography, fine art, commercial works and tech innovation. Mr. Fanny created the first navigation systems company for cities without street names and street numbers. And he attributes his abilities, capacities and accomplishments to being African, from which he says he learned, “the scarcity of resources put imagination and creativity into the things he does”.

Mr. Fanny claims creativity will be the base for the future of the workforce, and the value of the next generation. With Africa as the most creative continent in his eyes, Africa will also lead in innovation, creating things that do not exist and out of necessity.

Abiola Oke is CEO of OkayAfrica, a 360˚ media company whose mission is to connect a global audience to African culture. OkayAfrica produces original content and creative events, publishes editorial content on social media, provides music distribution services offering global exposure for African artists, and operates a robust e-commerce business which sells merchandise from around the world.

Mr. Oke challenged everyone to see ourselves in our own creativity and capabilities, to be able to truly value our own humanity and contributions. He believes, the solutions for what we are facing are there as well. He then offered a contrast between the notoriety of Thor, a mythological Nordic god of Thunder, who has comparable abilities to the Yoruba God Shango. Yet it is through the Hollywood machine that the Thor mythology is more recognizable to some African youth. The point, Mr. Oke emphasizes, is that we need to validate our own contributions.
creatively. He compared the $10 billion Hollywood industry to the $1 billion Nollywood industry. And though the Nollywood industry may not be necessarily trained at the highest level, there is a lot of power in the industry, the 2nd largest employer in the country, which includes content creation, script-writing, distribution, intellectual property protection, along with many other creatives.

He offered that in the U.S. there are institutions strictly for the preservation of culture – like music halls of fame, museums, etc. Much of African art exists in international museums. The argument is not only that we want the art back but how would they be shared in a digital era and how would they be preserved?

Mr. Oke closed his comments by drawing the parallel to what is globally seen as the gig economy, with companies like WeWork raising hundreds of millions of dollars for work happening in non-traditional work formats and providing open space for people to work in different industries. “We [have the most populous] informal workforce around the world. If we start to see ourselves (beginning with the arts, visuals, images and stories), we can start to find solutions to problems indigenous to us.”

UNESCO was represented by Professor Soro N’golo Aboudou, Secretary General for the National Commission of Côte d’Ivoire, who offered a historical reference to the importance of arts and culture through the institution’s mandate. In partnership with UNESCO member countries, donor partners, and the civil society continue to address all fundamental questions regarding culture. UNESCO now provides an unique global platform for international cooperation whereby all conventions that have been adopted by UNESCO member countries aim to promote cultures and cultural diversity and tolerance around the world. With the mandate’s inclusion of education, there was a clear understanding that these fields brought more than just opportunities to enjoy a society but promoted learning, employment and intellectual progress.

UNESCO, as an institution also encourages artists to create projects that would encourage young people to engage in cultural activities. The UNESCO World Heritage sites create employment opportunities for the local communities. They lead to the creation of a tourism sector that benefit the communities surrounding those sites. The sites are visited by many people, but also attract researchers and developers.

Dr. Alidou also asked speakers to consider how they would reach out to policy makers, looking beyond formal educational system to think of creativity in expanding the art, fashion, tourism and hospitality industries. She also looked for the panel to consider how to reach the majority of African youth - those who have not benefitted from formal Western forms of schooling.

The artists spoke of specific examples where in their own experiences formal education and policymakers were missing the mark. There was agreement amongst the panel that today’s market is not being referenced in schools. However, each artist shared how they are integrating skills development into their daily production methods to not only successfully reach the market with a quality product but also enhance the skills of the team.

There is economy, Ms. Diouf believes, that can be created out of art and creativity, but “we need a push from governments and structures that can invest in organizations like Tongoro, which have proven a sustainable profit model.” She spoke on the need for government interventions in training or education for youth and challenged them to help transform traditional know-how into an industry or set standards for African production.

Heavy critique of policymakers did also surface in the discussion, when Mr. Fanny doubted they believe in the same system they say they work to improve. Validation of the “foreign way of thinking” shows up, he said, in personal decisions that policymakers make on where their children get educated and extends into the way innovation and creativity is valued. Centering “Africanness” and the African identity is a value shared amongst all speakers and the basis for a challenge extended to policymakers to incorporate less theory and more practice.
Professor Aboudou reminded everyone that policymakers and governments do have a role to play when it comes to culture and should not be seen as an enemy of arts or culture. At the UNESCO level, governments around the world often come together to pass legislations and agree on laws that are meant to protect culture and cultural diversity around the world.

KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED

1. The disconnect between policymakers and the creative industry – Most panelists considered current investment in the creative industry to be largely insufficient for a field that will drive future economies. The critique of working with policymakers is that the focus of higher education doesn’t appropriately balance with the real-world issues of what happens and is needed daily. Skills training programs, financing, standardization and working directly with local people were cited as key ways for policymakers to provide more respectable, relevant and valuable support to the creative industry.

2. Arts and culture brand Africa for global consumption. These are the ways that most of the world learns about the continent and its people. Consistent quality and skilled production can replace old narratives. And by developing mechanisms for branding the styles, creativity and quality as “African”, creative products and services will build incomparable value from its authenticity.

3. Higher education programs are missing the mark on training people for creative careers. Programs are missing fundamental skills in their curricular design. Artists and creative entrepreneurs are filling the gap with their own resources and informal education programs to supplement and build their team capacity. However, higher education remains vastly important in terms of economies of scale. With the massification of the workforce, artists and educators together must figure out how to design curricula and experiential learning methods that are relevant and transformative.
The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) was created by the U.S. Congress in 2004 with the mission of taking its best practices of 60 years in foreign development assistance and U.S. public policy and apply them to a new agency.

The MCC distinguishes itself from other government agencies through four key markers: mission and structure; competitive process for partner selection; honing on in-country ownership; and focusing on results. Laura Rudert, Deputy Resident Country Director for Côte d’Ivoire, says the MCC model ascribes to poverty reduction through the means of economic growth. “The public sector has an important role to play in enabling private sector growth. However, countries first need sound policies that create an enabling environment for private sector investment,” says Rudert.

Countries must pass half of the indicators in an MCC scorecard, in addition to the control of corruption indicator and democracy/human rights and must maintain eligibility throughout the duration of the program. Countries must also demonstrate they have the leadership capacity to define and implement projects within the five-year window. In December 2015, MCC transitioned Côte d’Ivoire from a threshold program to compact development. MCC’s decision was based upon Côte d’Ivoire’s continued political stability and scorecard improvement, meeting 14 of 20 indicators in fall 2017, denoting major growth.

MCC’s focus on results is crucial to the success of grant projects. Each investment “must demonstrate at least a 10% rate of economic return hurdle,” says Rudert. The justification for this is that MCC wants to ensure the benefits justify the costs, and transparent programmatic structure allows for that. “Will this project and investment have an impact on income of household and impact of enterprises?”

In 2018, MCC’s Board of Directors selected Côte d’Ivoire as eligible for concurrent compacts in order to determine if there are projects that meet MCC’s investment criteria as well as evaluate the countries’ ability to work with MCC and a partner country on a regional investment. Concurrent pacts promote cross-border economic integration, trade, and collaboration; other countries in the region eligible for compacts are Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Niger.

Last November, Côte d’Ivoire signed a $525 million-dollar grant with the MCC to be executed over a course of five years. The two sectors the MCC saw investment priority were education and transportation. This was developed through a growth method diagnostic, developed at Harvard Kennedy School, in conjunction with Ivorian economists, to determine which sector would have the greatest impact on private sector led entrepreneurship and investments.

MCC’s education initiative in Côte d’Ivoire is formally known as the “Skills for Employability and Productivity Project”. The project will increase access to secondary education, teacher training, and support the construction of up to 84 new secondary schools in the country. Through a public-private partnership, the MCC is
also investing in 4 new technical vocational education and training (TVET) schools, which will advance development of in-demand skills; MCC is also investing in new data management system to help the Ministry of Education make better informed decisions based on evidence.

Rudert notes, when studying Côte d’Ivoire’s existing TVET centers, there was an imbalance between the supply and demand. There were already initiatives being implemented in technical vocational centers across Côte d’Ivoire, however, post-completion, students were unable to find employment in the private sector.

This prompted MCC to reconfigure and conceive a new model for TVET centers in Côte d’Ivoire, which puts the private sector at the center. The government will own the assets of TVET centers, but private sector associations will have a large role in defining content, creating curriculum, and teacher training.

MCC’s transportation initiative in Côte d’Ivoire is called the “Abidjan Transport Project”. According to MCC’s website, The Abidjan Transport Project will reduce transport costs and improve efficiencies for business by rehabilitating roads in and around the port area and improving road network management maintenance.

In Côte d’Ivoire, 20% of the population and 90% of businesses are in the city of Abidjan. The purpose of this initiative is to not only redesign the infrastructure of roads surrounding the capital, but to propose that reforms implemented will ensure sustainability. This will be accomplished through the development of a master’s level program in Infrastructure Management.

MCC has chosen two partner universities to implement its master’s program: Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny and École Nationale Supérieure de Statistique et d’Économie Appliquée d’Abidjan (ENSEA). The program will incorporate learning in three key fields: engineering, environment, and social components to infrastructure management.

MCC will finance the equipment, development of the curriculum, and work with institutions to help finance and create a business plan. The government will be responsible for selecting 20-30 students from the government road agency to participate in the program and define how students from private institutions can also participate.
DIGITAL DIASPORA: AFRICAN INTELLIGENCE IN DATA & TECH SPACES

Strategists often analyze the impact of what technology can do for Africa. The expectation is that tech in Africa leads to transformation, new opportunities for youth employment, and trends towards a “new future for Africa”. While these stories of tech investment dominate the headlines, panel moderator Melissa Howell opened the conversation by asking panelists to discuss their work and most impactful projects or influential challenges to date, as not enough attention is given to the ways in which African talent in Tech, data and digital spaces is defining the future.

AAI Alumnus Dr. Kétévi Assamagan is a member of the ATLAS collaboration at the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland. ATLAS’ scientific exploration seeks answers to fundamental questions such as: What are the basic building blocks of matter? What are the fundamental forces of nature? Could there be a greater underlying symmetry to our universe? ATLAS is one of the largest collaborative efforts ever attempted in science. It is comprised of 3000 scientific authors from 181 institutions around the world, representing 38 countries from all the world’s populated continents. Around 1200 doctoral students are involved in detector development, data collection and analysis.

Dr. Codou Diaw outlined some of the work at the Mastercard Foundation which is also training scholars at various centers of excellence across the continent. Ms. Wanjira Kamwere discussed Microsoft4Afrika’s AppFactory which provides training in application development for selected students.

Dr. Amadou Ouane, Technical Expert at the Ministry of Higher Education of the Republic of Mali shared their country’s biggest challenge is to train and retain qualified teachers. The government is working to locate educators who were trained internationally over the last 40 years, especially those who remained abroad, and assess how they might contribute to the current skills development gaps. He also shared about efforts the country has made to build Centers for Big Data. He believes that the balanced long-term investment in facility development and human resources will be evident over 10 years.

THE CURRENT SKILLS DEMAND
A recent McKinsey survey (see graph below) exposed the tech skills demand of IT workers and the global need to “rethink talent”. It claims, “on average, the top-quartile group [of respondents] will need to be replaced or fundamentally retrained (i.e. undergo six months or more of training) over the next three years.” 40 percent of respondents expect most of those workers will be replaced altogether.

Dr. Koutou N’Guessan Claude is a research professor at
the University of Félix Houphouët Boigny-Abidjan. With a multi-generational staff, he sees there are some teachers who have no or very limited skills and experience with computers and IT. There is a younger generation of staff who use technology at ease and have the habit of working in environments that incorporates technology within their studies. However, this generation of teachers includes many who began their own education in Africa, went abroad for further education, and return to face the challenge of having the technical skills but not the tools. Dr. Koutou sees the SOE as an avenue to advocate for more resources for universities. If African universities are to compete, there must exist greater political will to adequately fund them.

Our Data Science student panelist, Mr. Dabone Yacouba, recognizes there is great future potential for him and his peers once they receive adequate training and access to reliable data to develop the necessary skillset. He shares that much of the research they do at the university is dependent on data generated externally, mostly from Europe or the U.S. This imposes a tremendous bias as the data is taken out of context and may be used and analyzed in ways that are not fully reflective of the Ivorian reality. National data is only sometimes available but not readily accessible because it is not all stored in one place. If Côte d’Ivoire and Africa had platforms like Open Data, says Mr. Yacouba, this would allow students to have a global perspective and use more data for various studies. He believes Africa’s inability to own its data has extensive repercussions to decision-making, priority development, and even economic profitability.

**VALUING BIG DATA**

Mr. Yacouba sees Big Data has become raw material of most activities and there is a need to master it. “We need to understand how to produce, collect and analyze the data and extract the information that is more relevant to us. Most of the companies now rely on the data they receive to inform their decisions and to target certain customers.” It is therefore an imperative to learn these skills, if they are to compete. He further shares the opinion that more effort and investments should be made to ensure that students know how to create, use and analyze data, which would allow them to solve challenges that the Continent will face and, mitigate future crises.

For the ATLAS project, Dr. Assamagan shares that 600TB of data moves around the world daily. This data is constantly being coded and decoded, run and distributed in, by and from any part of the world. These processes rely on highly integrous platforms and skilled personnel, which, if was supported by the African continent, could help to ensure African participation in groundbreaking research and whose work on analysis projects would be considered amongst the most competitive talent in the world. It requires fast internet and stable computing structures, which assures the integrity of the data, but is also in very limited supply across the African continent. He acknowledges that this produces some bias in that if you are limited in representation or capacity in the project, you cannot decode the data. He looks to policymakers...
and universities to develop networks to be able to service that sort of data in Africa, on a continental level, and train our students to decode the information at global standards.

**EXPLORING AFRICAN PARTICIPATION IN TECH AND DATA BIAS**

Across the continent, Africans are designing scalable, technological advancements to transform their communities and influence the world. However, many technologies and digital spaces around the world are built on implicit biases that undermine a truly global application and create discriminant power structures. Scholars like Dr. Safiya Umoja Noble show how biases may exist in algorithms, as well as in data itself, both of which perceivably authenticate and transform them into “knowledge” that is socially acceptable and potentially damaging for what it represents. Panelists were asked to consider Africa's responsibility in ensuring advanced technologies and the production of data is unbiased and fully representative. How do they see investment in analysts and tech developers across the diaspora counterbalance inequities that have become the foundation of traditional tech spaces?

Dr. Diaw furthered the discussion by examining how leadership capacity building is incorporated into the work with the Mastercard Scholars. She emphasized that data is not only quantitative but also qualitative as it is reflective of the individuals collecting, analyzing and reporting it in varying capacities. The cumulative effect of this is a community of voices which breed new ideas, changing the daily lives of Africans and perceptions of Africa and young Africans.

Ms. Kamwere added that is why Microsoft created a framework of fairness, reliability, and equity, and utilizes a review board that is always checking and testing what is being produced. She urges our students to become a part of the Artificial Intelligence industry to help influence the data sets being constructed and used across platforms. A recent 60 Minutes story told of how China attracted more than half of all AI capital in the world in 2017. Still it is important to note that with so many companies operating (and others profiting) from the technology, biases are still involved, even when the computers are being programmed to learn on their own. Conversations with young people include a look at managing data and data analytics through their own testing for reliability. Microsoft efforts to hold their scholars accountable for ethical development as well as technical know-how.

**In China, data has become its own kind of abundant natural resource. Tech venture capitalist Kai-Fui Lee, founder of Sinovention Ventures, has called China “the Saudi Arabia of data.” “People are ordering takeout 10 times more than the U.S. They're doing mobile payment 50 times more than the U.S. They're ordering shared bicycles 300 times more than the U.S.,” Lee says in the clip above. “And all that data can be fed into an engine to make money as well as to improve user experience.”


At the time of the conference a new story surfaced on e-commerce giant Amazon and the biases which in their recruiting system were filtering women from shortlisting candidates. Many responses from speakers echoed the need to rebalance education which already shows signs of bias. Other responses showed the importance of participation extends beyond training talent to include reframing and reconfiguring systems, reliable infrastructure, sustainable long-term investment, and redefining who Africa is and the tremendous successes of young Africans who are making a difference in our lives, institutions and communities.

**KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED**

1. **Data may operate like raw material or finished goods in global markets.** All stages of data's “life cycle” are influenced by the human resources involved. Skills development in data analysis, reporting, collecting, manipulation, and redistribution all have opportunities for global competition.

2. **Greater involvement from the continent can challenge global narratives on Africa.** African leadership as trained human capacity, policymakers and universities have responsibility to challenge the narratives produced by data and big data when not reflective and representative.

3. **Critical analysis of the balance between talent development and market needs is reaching a tipping point of no-return.** Long-term vision and investment are necessary to build technology infrastructure for Africa to compete. However, the rapid pace in which talent is being replaced in the marketplace calls for an increasingly nimble strategy for skills training.
Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny (INP-HB) is a public higher education institute located in Yamoussoukro, the administrative capital of Côte d’Ivoire. The university was created in 1996 and is considered one of the most prestigious universities in Côte d’Ivoire. The INP-HB offers courses and programs leading to recognized certificates, bachelor and master’s degrees. Each year, around 700 Technical University Degrees (DUT), Senior Technician (TS), Technical Engineers (IT), Design Engineers (IC) are issued.

Through its high-quality recruitment of its students and teachers, the INP-HB is a center of excellence in the sub-region with the essential mission of providing the Continent with African leaders in various sectors. The INP-HB is composed of the School of Agronomy, School of Public Works, School of Business Administration, School of Engineering, School of Mining and Geology, and the School of Industry. In addition, the Institute houses five important centers that include the Regional Center in Metrology; the Training Center in Aeronautic; and the International Data of Science Institute.

The INP-HB continues to stand out as a world class institute, thanks to its ability to continuously adjust its curriculum to reflect the changing world. Around 70% of their students are employed upon graduation, a testament to their cutting-edge curricula.

The institute also works directly with high schools in Côte d’Ivoire to encourage more students, especially women, to pursue further students in science. The institute has partnered with two all-girls schools and they work with the students for two years before graduation, in order to increase their level in mathematics and physics; a requirement for admission at INP-HB.

Although INP-HB follows a french educational model, the university has entered in several partnerships with institutes from english-speaking countries, in its effort to diversify its student body. The students admitted to the INP-HB spend their first year studying French before they undertake courses towards their Bachelors’ degrees.

INP-HB was also selected as one the Africa Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE) for West African region. In the effort to increase the availability of highly skilled data scientists in Côte d’Ivoire and the region, the World Bank has been supporting the operation and expansion of the Data Science Institute, which is paving the way for African students to receive a master’s in data science, to build new capacity in the region in the analysis and management of currently under-exploited data of multiple types and sources.

During the 4th annual State of Education in Africa Conference (SOE), INP-HB students were selected as panellists, providing enlightened perspectives on the education system in Côte d’Ivoire.
GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: MEDIA & NARRATIVES

“Where in the World is Africa? Predicting coverage of Africa by US Television Network”, a study conducted by Guy Golan, looked at western print media and TV in the US, UK, and France, concluded that Africa is the least covered continent, comprising 6% to 9% of the total amount of international coverage. Additionally, most of the coverage was largely negative, with 60% of mentions on Africa referring to corruption, conflicts, natural disasters and terrorism. Entertainment and television “viewers were more than twice likely to see negative depictions of Africans than positive ones.” This representation of Africa has been perpetuated since colonialism and plays a powerful role in shaping how the West and the rest of the world refers to or interacts with Africa.

Panel moderator Amini Kajunju, Executive Director of IUGB Foundation, asked panelists to reflect on some of the key challenges facing the media in Africa to develop practical and action-driven solutions. Despite being home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world, headlines hardly show Africa’s social, political and economic progress and the technological revolution that is occurring. Limited resources have left African media houses unable to compete with global media in its reporting on Africa. The largest news agencies (from AP to AFP) are owned by shareholders in Western countries and affects the news flow from and to Africa.

Looking at the media landscape in Africa, the panelists recognized that African journalists face several challenges- from hostile media laws to a low level of professionalism. Indeed, the World Press Freedom Index which measures the level of media freedom in 180 countries reported no African countries ranked in the Top 10 in its report for 2018. Ghana was the highest ranked at number 23 and Eritrea the lowest ranked at number 179. Dr. Lawalley Cole, Executive Director of the Coalition on Media and Education for Development Africa Forum works with journalists across the continent and emphasized that governments should have clear media policies that are open and transparent to facilitate the media to do its work. Many African governments are implementing strict regulations on the media, affecting the type of local reporting that can occur.

The state regulations have also expanded to include internet shutdowns and social media restrictions. According to global digital rights group Access Now, there were 21 internet shutdowns across Africa last year, up from 13 in 2017. Those shutdowns were mainly at the government’s request, to regulate the information that the local population consumes. The case of Tanzania and Uganda are recent examples of government crackdown on the use of social media. Uganda passed a new tax on social media, under which users must pay USD 0.05 a day to use popular platforms like

MODERATOR: Amini Kajunju, Executive Director, IUGB Foundation
Sidick Bakayoko, CEO and Founder, Paradise Game
Lawalley Cole, Executive Director, Coalition on Media and Education for Development Africa Forum (CAFOR)
Erana Stennet, Director of Bloomberg Media Initiative Africa, Bloomberg
Bob Wekesa, Advisor, The Africa-China Reporting Project, University of the Witwatersrand
Kouame Amoin Elisabeth, Masters student at INP-HB

www.soefoundation.org/2018-video-library/soe2018globalconnections
Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Tanzania passed the Electronic and Postal Communications Online Content Regulations Act in March 2018, imposing restrictions on blogs, online content providers and requiring a USD 924 licensing fee and the auditing of content by the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA).

Panelists weighed in on media restrictions remarking that national governments move to regulate publicly accessible information affects investment opportunities. Many international investors and business firms are basing their economic investment decisions on the level of transparency available in developing countries. This demand for transparency largely targets African countries where financial information about their economies is rarely available. Erana Stennet, Director of Bloomberg Media Initiative Africa emphasized the critical importance of market transparency and stated that “governments that continue to engage in the suppression of this kind of information will not develop, because the investment community will look at this degree of transparency and that is where their investment will go.” The Bloomberg Media Initiative is committed to training African journalists on how to report on African economies and financial stories.

Panelists also acknowledged low levels of professionalism affect the ability of African journalists to contribute to the economic, social and political conversations on the continent. There is the prevalent action by African news organizations to copy and paste news on Africa from Western news agencies, even if those are perpetuating the negative stereotypes on the continent. “If we are going to change the narrative in Africa, we need to train people” who can and will counter that narrative, said Lawalley Cole. Bob Wekesa, advisor for the Africa-China Reporting Project at the University of the Witwatersrand noted the need to expand the institution’s facilities for media training and to encourage curriculum written by Africans to empower the next generation with skills to create strong voices on Africa.

Dr. Wekesa suggested to disband the mindsets that international media are more credible than our own. “We can partner with international organizations, but we cannot let them exploit us and monopolize all the information and manipulate it in the sense that we do not believe in ourselves.”

African stories often rely on international coverage of the continent, often dismissing local reporting and rarely use African local journalists to write those stories. In April 2018, the Editor-In Chief of the National Geographic wrote a letter acknowledging that most of the images

“It is important for us that business stories and financial stories are written about Africa and written by African journalists”
- Erana Stennet, Bloomberg Media Initiative
selected and headlines chosen in covering people of color, both in the US and abroad “did little to push its readers beyond the stereotypes ingrained in white American culture”.

According to Sidick Bakayoko, more media companies in Côte d’Ivoire are taking advantage of the penetration of mobile subscription in the country, using SMS to send daily news. With more than 420 million mobile subscribers on the continent, there are more opportunities for African voices to reach the masses. The use of Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook is also enhancing the power of expression on and from the continent. Africans are directly reaching a larger audience with social networks, leading to an increase in African voices countering pervasive negative images. Popular hashtags, like “#TheAfricaTheMediaNeverShowsYou” were started and supported by young people as an effort to post images that accurately reflect their countries and the continent.

The panel also encouraged audience members, whether individuals, a government or corporation, to use their own platforms to distribute information. Africa had the fastest growth rates in internet penetration in 2018, with the number of internet users across the region increasing by more than 20%. There are now more transparent, user-generated content breaking through with websites holding governments and international media to account. Citizen reporting is challenging normal sources of information as it presents an increase in horizontal instead of vertical communication. The Ford Foundation and Bloomberg Media Initiative have partnered to establish a joint program to invest in small to medium size communication organizations and elevate voices from local communities.

Lawalley Cole encouraged African Heads of State to establish Africa’s own “CNN” or “Al Jazeera” remarking that the African story will continue to be distorted until the continent develops its own media resources strong enough to be heard, in both broadcast and print. “Why can’t African Heads of State start thinking about a media that would be viable for the continent that can change the mindset of Africans and the rest of the World about Africa?”

KEY STRATEGIES / LESSONS LEARNED

1. Strengthen Higher Education: Capacity building of journalists. Investing in the training of professional journalists can provide African news organizations with competent journalists who understand local contexts and can effectively and fairly write stories about Africa.

2. Support diverse voices on Africa: Capitalize on digital technology. Digital platforms have opened new channels for African voices to reach the world and there is need to encourage and support those voices. OkayAfrica is a prime example of a digital space that provides reporting on African politics, society and culture in one space.

3. Nurturing local content. Investing in African news organizations and other media channels producing local content that can be disseminated around the world will positively influence the images on Africa. Community based news organizations have emerged as important curators of local content to support and initiate projects that promote our own culture.
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Founded in 1953, the Africa-America Institute’s (AAI) mission is to promote enlightened engagement between Africa and America through education, training and dialogue. AAI is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, non-profit organization with its headquarters in New York City and a representative office in Washington, D.C. The beneficiaries of our programs are present in every African country and America. We identify capacity-building projects and coordinate the programmatic, financial administration and evaluation necessary to deliver high-impact results. AAI raises funds to provide scholarships to smart and under-resourced students to attend top-performing African universities and develops programs that focus on increasing the skills of the next generation of African youth so that they become globally competitive. AAI alumni are at the forefront of Africa’s public, non-profit, and private sectors.

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AAI’S 5TH ANNUAL STATE OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA CONFERENCE
November 2019 - Dakar, Senegal

AAI will host our 5th Annual State of Education in Africa Conference (SOE) in Dakar, Senegal in November 2019. The conference will once again convene top educators, decision-makers, education innovators, students and stakeholders from Africa, the U.S. and other regions of the world to discuss bold approaches to transforming Africa’s higher education ecosystem in ways that bolster its competitiveness. 2019 conference topics will include training the future workforce in targeted growth industries, supporting education ecosystems, teacher training, data analysis, financing and African knowledge systems. We will continue to examine the role of Africa in the world and the identity and representation of Africa through historical and sociological perspectives.

To learn more about SOE topics and speaking opportunities, sign up for our AAI Newsletter at www.aaionline.org or follow us on social media: