

Africa Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund for Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology

Progress Report to the PASET EB July - September 2020

Executive Summary

The Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF) aims to build the critical mass of skills and knowledge needed to increase the use of science, technology, and innovation for sustainable economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This Report provides key achievements of the program for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020. The following are highlights over the period:

- a) Following the signing of subsidiary agreements (SAs), work plans for the first six-month period have been submitted to the governments of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal and the first instalment of funds are awaited. Benin and Nigeria have prepared and discussed draft SAs with *icipe* for contributions to RSIF. *Icipe* has also been in discussion with the Government of Mozambique which is preparing a higher education project to the World Bank which includes a contribution to RSIF. Engagement was initiated with Nestlé, Olam and Microsoft, as part of efforts to enhance engagement with the private sector.
- b) The *icipe*-RSIF proposal to the European Commission ACP call for proposal was provisionally selected for funding. The proposal will extend RSIF's windows 2&3 work in West Africa and focus on digital innovation. Partners include Agropolis Foundation in France, and Gearbox Pan Africa Network Limited. The total project amount is Euro 4.7 with an 85% contribution from the EU of Euros 4.1million for four years.
- c) Lion's Head Global Partners, the firm commissioned to undertake the work, updated the progress report, which was reviewed by *icipe* management, CAG and the PASET EB. A draft fundraising strategy has now been developed and sounding with key potential development partners undertaken. Terms of reference for proposed governance organs have also been prepared. The updated report was submitted to the EB in September 2020 for review and approval.
- d) *Icipe* published a Call for the selection of four additional AHUs to offer PhD programs in the PASET priority thematic areas, in order to create sufficient capacity for the rapidly expanding numbers of RSIF PhD students.
- e) *icipe* has developed a Capacity Building Strategy to enhance the quality of PhD training at AHUs, and the implementation of the research and innovation grants. The strategy implementation has begun with delivery of cross cutting courses, seminars, and development of a strategy to support accreditation, among others.
- f) RCU has prepared a draft manual that provides guidelines on IP management for research activities conducted by RSIF scholars and those of the research and innovation grants. The manual will be shared for PASET EB approval in the next period.
- g) Scholars are performing well academically and have remained motivated despite the COVID-19 challenges. All 15 cohort one students are now matched to IPIs. RSIF Cohort II scholars are at various stages of reporting to the host universities to start their PhD studies. For Cohort III, *icipe* published the call on April 30, 2020 with a deadline of June 22, 2020. A total of 2,202 (378 women/ 857 faculty) were received, representing 40 African countries (The statistics of applications by country and gender can be viewed [here](#)).
- h) RCU advanced in the contracting of the fourteen Window 2 & 3 projects approved by the EB for implementation.

- i) To enable Africa Host Universities (AHUs) and scholars to overcome key challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, RSIF has provided a range of support including facilitation of their engagement in various online resources.
- j) RSIF's visibility has been growing progressively. There has been extensive coverage of RSIF activities resulting from strategic campaigns. The RSIF weekly newsletter has had 17 issues to date with over five thousand subscribers. RSIF Tweet impressions have now surpassed 100,000 up from 27,983 in the period from July-21 September. Currently there are 978 and 581 people following the RSIF Facebook and Twitter accounts respectively. A social media strategy has been prepared to compliment the overall communication strategy which is in finalisation.

The key challenge during the period has been the impact of COVID-19 on the program. Facilities have been largely inaccessible for students including both at WPI and KIST. There is some improvement and the RCU is working closely with IPIs and students to mitigate further delays in research and overall graduation timeframe.

1.0 Introduction

The Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF) aims to build the critical mass of skills and knowledge needed to increase the use of science, technology and innovation for sustainable economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This Report provides a summary of progress in implementation of the RSIF Program for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020. The report is arranged in the two RSIF program component areas: viz, Component 1: *Capacity Development for Operation of the Scholarship, Research and Innovation Fund*; and Component 2: *PhD Scholarships, research grants and innovation grants*.

A. Component 1: Capacity Development for Operation of the Scholarship, Research and Innovation Fund

1.1 Capacity building for management of the RSIF General Fund and setting up the RSIF Endowment Fund:

The sub-component aims to strengthen the capacity of the RCU to engage in innovative fund-raising strategies to reach development partners relevant to the Fund and to design and operationalise the RSIF endowment fund.

1.1.1 Resource mobilization

Key updates during the period are:

- a) African countries are at various stages of contributing to RSIF as presented in Annex 1. Following the signing of subsidiary agreements (SAs), work plans for the first six-month period have been submitted to the governments of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal and the first instalment of funds are awaited. Benin and Nigeria have prepared and discussed draft SAs with *icipe* for contributions to RSIF. *Icipe* has also been in discussion with the Government of Mozambique which is preparing a higher education project to the World Bank. The project includes a contribution to RSIF.
- b) The RCU drafted and dispatched formal communication signed by the PASET-GC chair to Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire to follow up on their planned RSIF contributions.
- c) *icipe* has prepared a template for reporting to RSIF contributing governments on a regular basis on the Project and issues related to each country.
- d) The RCU continues to follow up with other countries that had expressed interest to contribute to RSIF.
- e) Engagement was initiated with Nestlé, Olam and Microsoft, as part of efforts to enhance engagement with the private sector.
- f) The *icipe*-RSIF proposal to the European Commission ACP call for proposal was provisionally selected for funding. The proposal will extend RSIF's windows 2&3 work in West Africa and focus on digital innovation. Partners include Agropolis Foundation in France, and Gearbox Pan Africa Network Limited. The total project amount is Euro 4.7 with an 85% contribution from the EU of Euros 4.1million for four years.

1.1.2 Endowment Fund design

Lion's Head Global Partners, the firm commissioned to undertake the work, updated the progress report, which was reviewed by *icipe* management. A draft fundraising strategy has now been developed and sounding with key potential development partners undertaken. Terms of reference for proposed governance organs have also been prepared. The report was submitted to the EB in September 2020 for review and approval.

Request to the EB: Provide direction on legal structure including choice of legal domicile and the feasibility of the proposed fundraising strategy. The EB should also guide on the suggestions directed

to PASET members on contributions such as an annual minimum subscription of USD 0.5million for all PASET members to RSIF from 2025 and the encouragement of the enactment of levies and that will provide sustainable funding to RSIF.

1.2 Capacity development for the operation and management of doctoral training scholarships in selected AHUs

1.2.1 Selection of additional RSIF African Host Universities

Icipe published a Call for the selection of additional AHUs to offer PhD programs in the PASET priority thematic areas, in order to create sufficient capacity for the rapidly expanding numbers of RSIF PhD students. The Call will focus on PhD programs in three thematic areas: ICTs including big data and artificial intelligence; energy including renewables; climate change; and Food Security and Agribusiness. Only universities that are either World Bank Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACEs) and existing African Host Universities (AHU)s are eligible to apply. ACEs will be eligible to make one application in their relevant area, whereas existing AHUs will be eligible to make one application in each of the eligible thematic areas except the area for which they were previously selected. *Icipe* has disseminated the call widely, including through AAU and IUCEA.

Table 1. Timeline for the recruitment of four additional RSIF African Host University partners

	Activity	Original timeline	Revised timeline
1	Call for applications	14 Aug 2020	1 Oct 2020
2	Informational Webinar for Potential Applicants	28 Aug 2020	14 Oct 2020
3	Deadline for application submissions	5 Oct 2020	30 Nov 2020
4	Completeness and eligibility check by RCU	12 Oct 2020	7 Dec 2020
5	Technical evaluation of applications by thematic area experts	2 Nov 2020	15 Jan 2021
6	Virtual meeting of IEC to shortlist applications	16 Nov 2020	31 Jan 2021
7	Validation of shortlisted applications by in-country experts	30 Nov 2020	14 Feb 2021
8	Virtual meeting of the IEC to make the final selection of African Host Universities	14 Dec 2020	28 Feb 2021
9	Negotiations and signing of agreements between AHUs and <i>icipe</i>	12 Feb 2021	30 Mar 2021

1.2.2 Information Communications and Technology

Purchase and delivery of the RCU video conferencing equipment has been completed and installation ongoing. Purchase of video conferencing equipment for the 11 AHUs is underway with procurement being undertaken in-country but coordinated by RCU to provide technical backstopping support. The development of RSIF's Management Information System (MIS) will be initiated in the next period. The Procurement has identified Core-Tec Ltd, and contracting is ongoing. Discussions took place on the intellectual property ownership for the system, which the consultant agreed to transfer to the RCU.

Other RSIF ICT ecosystem components that are under development include:

- RSIF Website revamp (involving new design, database restructuring, web 2.0 improvement and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is 80% complete.
- RSIF repository and knowledge hub is being finalized and can be accessed at <http://repository.rsif-paset.org:8080/xmlui/>.
- Enterprise Resource Planning implementation is under user acceptance testing.

Request to the EB: To note the progress in strengthening the use of ICT for programmatic implementation.

1.3 Capacity development for improving the quality of PhD programs and research in ASET fields

1.3.1 International accreditation of RSIF PhD programs at AHUs

A strategy for [international accreditation of RSIF PhD programs](#) at AHUs has been developed and is now incorporated into the RSIF Capacity Building Strategy.

1.3.2 Capacity Building Strategy and Implementation

icipe has developed a Capacity Building Strategy to enhance the quality of PhD training at AHUs, and the implementation of the research and innovation grants. The strategy was reviewed by the AHUs and the CAG and recommendations revised into the Strategy. During the period, cross cutting courses were implemented for scholars on i) advanced Information Literacy and Reference Management (13-14 August 2020) attended by 73 participants (including 59 RSIF PhD scholars) and ii) Monitoring and Evaluation held on 23-24 September 2020.

RSIF Guest Webinar Series

The monthly seminar series brings together students, academic faculty, leaders in scientific research and innovation and industry partners. Three webinars have been held in the period on i) *Mental Health for PhD Scholars*; ii) *Nanotechnology and Biomaterials for Cancer Detection and Treatment* and on iii) *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*.

1.3.3 Increased access to subscribed e-resources

An online meeting with librarians from all AHUs was held on 23 July 2020 to discuss RSIF support for journal subscriptions. To date one AHU (UoN) has completed negotiations with Elsevier, and three others are in the process of negotiations. The process is expected to be concluded by November 2020.

1.3.4 Development of a Research Strategy for RSIF

The Research Strategy aims to align research supported by RSIF with those of the PASET member countries to achieve maximum impact. So far, review of relevant science, technology and innovation policy documents from PASET RSIF participating countries has been done. Further, strategic documents from major regional and international organizations supporting research and graduate training has been completed. Initial consultations have been done with key stakeholders from governments, higher education, technical experts in thematic areas, international partner institutions and African Host Universities. A report of the findings is currently being prepared.

Request to the EB: To note that the strategy for accreditation will be reviewed to ensure that it aligns to the needs of the universities.

1.4 Capacity development for the operation and management of innovation grants

1.4.1 Implementation Status of RSIF Innovation Grants

In the last reporting period, the PASET EB approved award of six projects for implementation of the Institutional Innovation Capacity Building Program Grants (ICBP) and two projects for the Cooperability Grants. Following this approval, *icipe* organized a feedback session and an innovation capacity building workshop to help projects teams revise their proposal documents to meet the objectives of the grants. During the period, *icipe* also continued to provide one-on one technical support to project teams to revise their proposals, budgets, result matrices and complete project grant agreements. Furthermore, RCU organized a workshop for the Institutional Capacity Building Program Grantees in which findings from the 1st Phase of the study to four (4) AHUs were disseminated and used to inform restructuring of the proposals to address the key gaps and recommendations to strengthen innovation ecosystems at the RSIF AHUS. Formal signing of the agreements by *icipe* and the respective African Host Universities is

underway. RCU developed a detailed Technical Assistance Implementation Plan to support the grantees during the implementation of the projects.

1.4.3 Development of IP Manual for RSIF

RCU has prepared a draft manual that provides guidelines on IP management for research activities conducted by RSIF scholars and those of the research and innovation grants. Some key areas covered include management of foreground and background IP, access rights, cost of IPR protection, dissemination and management. *icipe* is consulting with the African Host Universities on the draft manual. The manual will be shared for PASET EB approval in the next report.

Request to the EB: To note that the IP manual will be shared with the CAG, AHUs and experts for review before EB approval. Lessons from the innovation grants will be used to inform the preparation of the second Call for proposals for RSIF Windows 2&3.

B. Component 2: PhD Scholarships, Research Grants and Innovation Grants

2.1 Training of doctoral Students

2.1.1 Status of Cohort 1 RSIF PhD Scholars

Scholars are performing well academically and have remained motivated despite the COVID-19 challenges. Two scholars have published papers ([J Hakazimana](#) & [Sylvia Maina](#)) during the period and others in virtual conferences. Scholars have remained in close contact with their supervisors at both the AHUs and the IPIs. The focus this quarter has been supporting scholars to accelerate their research work to complete their studies on time. The first cohort of RSIF scholars are expected to complete their studies by February 28, 2022. All 15 cohort one students are now matched to IPIs. The three previously not matched have now all been placed (Jean Nepomuscene Hakizimana; ii) Levi Omache, Kenya and iii) Traore Abdoulaye. A monthly forum has been organised for RSIF students to discuss their research work.

2.1.2 Current Status of the Cohort 2 RSIF PhD Scholars

RSIF Cohort II scholars are at various stages of reporting to the host universities to start their PhD studies. They have been delayed somewhat by the COVID-19 situation due to university closures. The situation is normalising at most of the AHUs, however Bayero University, Kano remains closed and the University of Ghana has delayed their academic year now slated to begin November 22, 2020. The status of the students is presented [here](#). *icipe* has initiated matching of scholars including to Korean institutions.

2.1.3 Selection of Cohort III of PhD Scholars

icipe published the call for Cohort III of RSIF PhD scholarships on April 30, 2020 with a deadline of June 15, 2020. The call was subsequently extended to June 22, 2020. A total of 2,202 (378 women/ 857 faculty) were received, representing 40 African countries (The statistics of applications by country and gender can be viewed [here](#)). Due to delays in university level selection, an updated schedule is included in Table 2.

Table 2. Revised timeline for the recruitment of the third cohort of RSIF PhD Scholars

	Activity	Original Timeline (2020)	Revised Timeline
1	<i>Call for Applications open (complete)</i>	<i>April 30</i>	<i>April 30</i>
2	<i>Deadline for application submission (complete)</i>	<i>June 22</i>	<i>June 22</i>

3	Screening and completeness check by the RCU (complete)	July 6	July 6
4	AHU shortlisting	July 24	September 28
5	Shortlisted candidates' one-way interview	August 3	October 9
6	Desk review and evaluation of applications by IRC	August 24	November 2
7	Evaluation by the Independent Evaluation Committee	September 7	November 23
8	Final selection of Cohort 3 Scholars	Mid- September 2020	December 18

Request to the EB: The EB is requested to note the progress in Cohort 1& 2 scholars. The change of schedules for the selection of Cohort is also highlighted. New EB members should align contributions to enable participation in the third RSIF PhD Cohort.

2.2. Research Grants

2.2.1 Implementation status of Research Grants (Window 2, Type 1)

RCU advanced in the contracting of the six (6) projects approved for the implementation of the Research Award grants. During the period, technical support was provided to project teams to assist them revise their proposals, budgets, result matrices and complete project grant agreements. Projects have integrated 2-3 RSIF scholars in each project to carry out their PhD research within the projects. Formal signing of the agreements by *icipe* and the respective African Host Universities is underway.

The EB is requested to note the progress in implementation of the Research and Innovation grants

C. Crosscutting activities

3.1 RSIF response to COVID -19

To enable Africa Host Universities (AHUs) and scholars to overcome key challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, RSIF has provided a range of support. For AHUs support included facilitation of their engagement in various online resources such as the training workshop on 'The use of Online Educational Resources in Higher Education' co-organized by EPFL (Switzerland) and UM6P (Morocco). A webinar was also organized on 'Helping Faculty Deliver their Courses Online during the COVID-19 Crisis' with Arizona State University. RSIF is providing access to over 20,000 online resources including linking to new resources that have become freely available during the time of COVID-19. To enable better access, RSIF is in the process of purchasing a set of video conferencing facilities for each of the 11 African Host Universities. AHU staff were facilitated to participate in a training with the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) on COVID-19 and 3D printer assembly as well as printing of face masks, face shields and respirator parts in April 2020. The training involved a total of eight sessions and was attended by staff of all the eleven universities. Universities were able to learn practically how to print various PPEs and supplied these to hospitals and to the public. A full list of activities can be accessed [here](#).

3.2. RSIF communications

RSIF's visibility has been growing progressively. There has been extensive coverage of RSIF activities resulting from strategic campaigns. There has also been consistent coverage in *icipe* publications, including being featured prominently in a recent publication [Insects for Life](#) (page 169 – 170), a special high profile publication commemorating *icipe's* 50th Anniversary, and the Centre's e-bulletins, which are circulated widely to all donors, collaborators, and the media. There is increasing capacity of AHUs to communicate and raise visibility of RSIF, for example by highlighting their own accomplishments and roles, and growing visibility of RSIF scholars and their research, through interviews in various

outlets. The RSIF weekly newsletter has had 17 issues to date with over five thousand subscribers. RSIF Tweet impressions have now surpassed 100,000 up from 27,983 in the period from July-21 September. Currently there are 978 and 581 people following the RSIF Facebook and Twitter accounts respectively. A social media strategy has been prepared to compliment the overall communication strategy which is in finalisation.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

During the period, *icipe* organized a workshop on 29th June 2020 to build M&E capacity of grantees towards developing M&E systems for proposed research and innovations grants i.e. the results frameworks and workplans. Project proposals were reviewed, and grantees were facilitated through a process of revising their M&E systems before final signing of the MoUs. The two semi-annual satisfaction surveys, targeting the AHU contact persons and the PhD students, have been designed in SurveyMonkey data collection tool and ready for implementation. The survey will be rolled out towards the end of September 2020. Besides, as part of the project learning strategy, the project plans to organize a Conference to provide an opportunity for learning from RSIF program implementation. It is proposed that the first Conference will be held in 2021 under the theme “*The digital revolution, science, technology and innovation for solving Africa’s current and future development challenges: Implications for universities, governments and the private sector*”. Project management has continued to track project progress against the set performance indicator targets. Information was collected to update the results framework during the fifth quarter. A successful World Bank Implementation Support mission to *icipe* was held 28-30 September 2020. Participation included key RSIF contributing members and stakeholders.

Request to the EB: The EB is requested to note the preparation of the RSIF annual Conference mid - next year and requested to consider to participate in the event. An updated document will be shared with the next report.

3.4 Safeguards and RSIF Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

The recruitment of a Social Safeguards Consultant was concluded in June 2020. The consultant has been following up with all RSIF AHUs to (1) review the status of safeguards and GRM at each university, (2) identification of safeguards/GRM focal persons at each AHU. The Consultant has facilitated orientation and training of AHU contact persons to equip them with adequate resources and tools to implement the Safeguards and RSIF GRM at each of the AHUs.

3.5 Review of Operational Manual

The RSIF Operational Manual is being updated and will be shared with the PASET Executive Board (EC) for approval, with the consideration of additional input and recommendation on changes, from other stakeholders including the scholarships experts.

3.6 Internal Audit

The internal audit for the RSIF is currently ongoing with the final report expected to be submitted to World Bank on 30th October 2020.

3.7 Procurement

Status of procurement as at September 2020 is provided [here](#).

3.8 Key challenges during the period

The key challenge has been the impact of COVID-19 on the program. Facilities have been largely inaccessible for students including both at WPI and KIST. One of the Cohort 1 students (Jean Baptiste Habinshuti, Rwanda- WPI) has experienced challenges moving radioactive materials which have been

seized in France. There is some improvement and the RCU is working closely with IPs and students to mitigate further delays in research and overall graduation timeframe.

3.9 Utilization of funds (Summary) from the Governments of Kenya, Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Senegal (January 2018 – August 2020). Please access full file [here](#)

INCOME	Recipient	Description			Total (USD)
B8501G00001	icipe	Fund received from AAU-Kenya and Rwanda			3,413,977
B8501G00001	icipe	Funds received from Ivorian Govt			1,033,497
B8501G00001	icipe	Signed Agreement - Ghana			2,000,000
B8501G00001	icipe	Signed Agreement - Burkina Faso			2,000,000
B8501G00001	icipe	Signed Agreement - Govt of Senegal			2,000,000
	Total Income				10,447,474
EXPENDITURE	Payee	Description	Oct 18-Dec 2019	Jan 20 -Aug 2020	Total
	Total Expenditure		284,252	361,336	645,588
	Balance				9,801,886

4.0 RSIF Funds allocation Report - Government Contributions

INCOME	Notes	Kenya	Rwanda	Ivory Coast	Ghana	Burkina Faso	Senegal	TOTAL
Funds received or per signed agreem	A	1,979,177	1,963,292	1,033,497	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	10,975,966
Less : AAU Admin charges	B	131,105	130,387	-	-	-	-	261,492
Funds available for Scholarships	C=A-B	1,848,072	1,832,905	1,033,497	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	10,714,474
Scholarship Cost per student (4 years	E	97,300	97,300	97,300	97,300	97,300	97,300	
Number of Scholarships Available	F=C/E	18	18	10	20	20	20	106
Allocation of Scholarships								
80% to Nationals	80% G	15	15	8	16	16	16	86
20% to Non Nationals	20% H	3	3	2	4	4	4	20
Scholarships Awarded								
Nationals	74% I	14	9	4	8	3	3	41
Non Nationals	26% J	5	3	2	2	2	-	14
Scholarships to Award								
Nationals	K=G-I	-	6	4	8	13	13	44
Non Nationals	L=H-J	-	-	-	2	2	4	8
Funds spent on Scholars								
By AAU	M	178,000	89,000	-	-	-	-	267,000
By Icipe	N	326,912	219,676	9,000	72,000	18,000	-	645,588
Fund Balance	O=C-M-N	1,343,160	1,524,229	1,024,497	1,928,000	1,982,000	2,000,000	9,801,886