

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: 251 11 5517700 Fax: 251 11 5 517844

website: www.africa-union.org

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**FIRST EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF THE
CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION
OF THE AFRICAN UNION (COMEDAF IV+)
NAIROBI, KENYA
11 - 13 MAY 2011**

AU/ EXPT/EDUC/3g (IV+)

**OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION PLAN
FOR
THE PAN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY PROJECT**

OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION PLAN
FOR
THE PAN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY PROJECT

Taking into consideration that:

- communication is a critical management tool for implementation and scaling up by helping the creation of a common understanding and commitment to project objectives and activities among all stakeholders as well as development of realistic decision making at all levels,
- communication can add value as an operational tool to help promotion and adoption of new practices and to build networks among stakeholders,
- Communication works best when interventions are planned, funded and implemented as an independent component ,
- communication should be based on principles of freedom, openness, transparency and consistency

The following communication operational plan is proposed. It summarises how to make optimal use of communication tools and effectively integrates a comprehensive strategy communication in order to help achieve the overall objectives of the PAU.

Communication operational plan

Timing	Project specificities	Communication objectives	Target audience	Supporting materials/ related activities	Limitations/ reserves
1- Internal communication: well developed and performed management team					
From now until December 2011, time of setting up the Rectorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launching of the 5 institutes - finalization of relevant documents of the PAU project set-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure clear understanding of the project objectives and processes, • To facilitate transparent and continuous sharing of information, • To co-ordinate efforts to ensure a qualitative process and successful set-up of the PAU project, • To share information to ensure synergies with relevant higher education continental initiatives already developed, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project management team - African Union relevant departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic and regular meetings of the Management Unit Team to discuss roles, responsibilities, progress, partners' involvements, achievements, future steps and relevant topics. - Telephone conference calls and verbal exchanges. - Login based intranet within the website to share relevant documents, meetings outcomes, progress reports, key dates... - Daily functional emails mainly useful to draw attention and flag up when new information is available, events are ongoing or website content updated, etc... - Instant messaging to allow real time communication. - Briefing AU Management team meetings with bi-Monthly progress reports. - Producing of a management handbook (relevant documents). - Regular meetings with relevant AU departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of adequate internet connexion. - Availability of updated contact list.
2- External communication					

<p>July to October 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last stages of the identification phase, - Initial stages of the institutionalization of the project. - Endorsement of three thematic areas within three African regions , - Start of operational stage to launch the first institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise continued interest and build understanding and commitment to project development processes amongst African Union Member States; • To heighten awareness and ownership about the project within the African academic and research community, including African Diaspora; • To mobilise the required funds needed to set up the project within the scheduled time frame and in a manner that will ensure its sustainability; • To facilitate the involvement of the various key stakeholders in the effective implementation and functioning of the PAU. • To develop partnerships and joint endeavours with selected African Union Member States, regional communities and selected African universities. • Market the PAU to prospective students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AU Member states - Opinion and academic leaders - African higher education associations - International organisations involved in higher education and research - African academic and research community - African Diaspora - Lead partners - Potential development Partners - African universities - Regional communities' departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt a logo to get key people recognise the PAU project. - Organise 3 sensitization workshops including relevant information about the PAU in the three already selected regions. - Organise periodic briefing meetings with partners and already selected lead partners (1 meeting per month). - Produce a program information kit, both in paper and digital forms. - Set up a website (1) for maximum visibility to reach a wider audience by ensuring more interactivity and responsiveness to the request of information. - Produce print and electronic media: brochures, posters, leaflets, flyers...and disseminate extensively especially at regional level... - Visits, trips and official meetings mainly with host countries and lead partners. - Edit a press kit. - Draw up a mailing list with eminent academicians and opinion academic leaders. - Take part in the African students' events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of continuous management of related activities. - Necessary urgent identification of relevant networks and email addresses of eminent African academicians. - Need of repeating communication activities mainly at key phases of implementation to help involvement of eminent academicians and key partners and to maintain sustainability of the process.
<p>November to December 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch of the first institute. - Endorsement of the statute and final structure of the PAU by COMEDAF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To value partner's contributions and support to the project, - To ensure that all staff are appropriately and effectively informed of the PAU's vision and aims, - To emphasise the importance of collaborative efforts, - To ensure that current and prospective students are appropriately and effectively informed, - To support PAU's student and staff recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AU Member states - Opinion academic leaders - African higher education associations - International organisations involved in higher education and research - African academic and research community - African Diaspora 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organise a Kick-off meeting with official inauguration ceremony of the first institute. - Open press conference after COMEDAF Meeting. - Promote quarterly e-newsletter (2) for informing and updating a wide range of stakeholders on developments, upcoming events and special interest topics. - Create media interest and opportunities to promote first achievements of the PAU (social and commercial media) by developing long term relationships with relevant reporters and journalists. - Promote public relations mainly with scientific publications mass media and regional and national newspapers. - Link PAU achievements' media coverage with other news and events on continental, regional and national levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued development and updates of the website content. - Availability of up – today information.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead partners - Potential development Partners - African universities - Regional communities' departments 		
January to December 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch of the 4 institutes. - Set up of the Rectorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To market the PAU to prospective students, - To maintain appropriate levels of engagement of relevant stakeholders, - To ensure involvement of eminent African academicians mainly from the Diaspora 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchange of good practices between involved AU Member States and selected universities, - Continue encouraging commitment to PAU from all stakeholders. - Organise periodic briefing meetings with partners and already selected lead partners (1 meeting bi- monthly). 	Necessary updates of the website content
From January 2012		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To highlight sustainable support and partnerships with lead and development partners, - To promote attractiveness and protect the PAU reputation, - To maintain an effective and open dialogue with staff and students - To support all staff to act as brand ambassadors for the PAU. - To focus on PAU's strengths in academic excellence, - To maintain and develop sustainable long term contact and involvement with PAU alumni students through the creation of an Student Alumni Association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff and students - Prospective staff and students - Business and community groups - Funding institutions - Lead and development partners 		Necessary updates of the website content

(1) The website

It has to act as an invaluable tool for the PAU project. Being the first source of information, it needs to offer the right information in a clear and accessible design and structure.

The web site should provide an overview of the PAU, its objectives, progress and results, partnerships and key contacts.

The website shall be practical, informative and interactive and can develop:

- Section dedicated to the press: latest press releases, fact sheets, photos....
- Links with relevant websites,
- Dialogue platform: FAQ, forums...
- A login based intranet for partners and management unit members.

Attention has to be paid to website design and usability.

The reader should be able to access all information with no more than 3 clicks. It is proposed to make it easy to navigate between pages and keep the design minimal and professional

Content is the most important part of the website. It is recommended to:

- highlight key words,
- use meaningful sub-headings,
- break up the text with sections and bulleted lists,
- use the inverted pyramid writing style: present news and conclusions first, detail and background information later,
- be concise and avoid long texts,
- be neutral to avoid losing credibility.

(2) E- newsletter:

E-newsletters are good medium to let people know regularly about the project, its recent changes, new initiatives...

E-newsletter can be available on the website and in email version.

Budget

The communication operational plan should be fully resourced to achieve its goals. Managers need to arrange and determine how to use limited resources in the most efficient and useful manner. The size of the communication budget depends on various issues related to the size of the project, its location and existing communication capacities.

Two types of costs are related to the communication operational plan:

- 1- Human resources costs including fees for permanent staff and professional communication consultants,
- 2- Communication activities costs and capacity building reflecting costs of producing print and electronic materials, maintaining electronic products, organizing workshops and meetings...

Communication budget proposal for 2010:

Items	Unit	Approximate cost (US Dollars)	notes
Adopt a logo	1	10 000	In the process
three sensitization workshops regional travels + per diems)	3	15 000	Possible shared costs with lead partners and selected AU Member States
program information kit	Lump sum	5 000	Possible involvement of AU relevant department to support part of this cost
Conception of the website		10 000	Cost depends on the total number of pages, kind of navigation menus, pages design and graphics needed, form of text content and fields, interactive forms, hosting arrangements and search engine positioning.
Promotional products	Lump sum	5 000	Possible involvement of AU relevant department to support part of this cost
Conception of the e-newsletter model		5 000	Content always comes before expensive design
Meetings with host countries and lead partners.		10 000	Possible shared costs with lead partners and selected AU Member States
Total		60 000	

Evaluation

Based on systematic feedback and other monitoring mechanisms used during implementation, the proposed communication operational plan can be updated, modified and fine-tuned at any time.

Key performance indicators relative to the communication activities should be included in the academic strategy, the Staff hiring strategy and the operational plans of the PAU.

Successful project managers typically have good communication skills and the ability to effectively present the issues, listen and act on feedback and foster harmony among team members.

The success of the communication plan is strongly linked to the ownership, enthusiasm, dynamism and perseverance of the Management Unit Members.