



# Grant strengthens African Virtual University's capacity

To strengthen the capacity of African Virtual University (AVU), the African Development Bank Group's board of directors has approved a US \$15.6 million grant from its concessionary lending arm, the African Development Fund (ADF).



Agnes Soucat, the bank's director for human development, said, "One of our human development goals is to increase access to higher education through ICT and help African institutions benefit from and contribute to the global production and distribution of knowledge. By helping to build the capacity of the AVU, we are doing just that. The group's financial support through this grant is consistent with the bank's new model for education in Africa."

Transforming African economies into knowledge economies will require increased investments in higher education. Most African countries do not have the capacity to build traditional university campuses needed to absorb the large and increasing demand for higher education.

## "A large distance and e-learning network"

Awarded the top prize for best emerging initiative by the US based education-portal.com, AVU has graduated more than 40 000 students across Africa and established a large distance and e-learning network in over 27 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

AVU comprises 10 open distance and e-learning centres and an online interactive portal consisting of 219 course modules in math and science, teacher education, basic ICT skills and ICT classroom integration. Students are able to avail themselves of materials free of charge, and these are available in English, French and Portuguese. Students in 142 countries currently use the portal.

The grant will finance the establishment of 12 new open distance and e-learning centres. It will also upgrade 15 e-learning centres at the 27 AVU partner institutions across Africa, develop ICT capacity, enhance science and technology programmes and train staff to develop various distance and e-learning courses. A key outcome of the project will be to increase the number of qualified female scientists in AVU partner institutions.

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