Higher Education
Strategy Center

ETHIOPIA

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Ethiopia covers an area of 1,133,380 sq km and has a population estimated at over 70 million and growing at an annual rate of 2.1% per year. Traditional peasant agriculture generates the income accounting for half of Ethiopia’s GDP, 85% of exports and 80% of total employment. The industrial sector contributes only 10% to the GDP, 15% to the exports and employs only about 2% of the labor force. Economic growth averaged about 5% per year over the period 1999/2000 to 2004/05 (MoFED, 2005). Adjusting to population growth, average per capita incomes rose only by about 2.1% per year. Recurrent drought, population increase, malaria and HIV/AIDS are the biggest challenges the country is facing at present.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR
The new education and training policy of Ethiopia has given immense attention to the expansion of quality, equitable and relevant education and training. In the last few years, much has also been achieved in the expansion of tertiary education. Seven new full-fledged universities were added to the already two in the last ten years and twelve more are planned to open in the near future. Due to these efforts the annual student intake capacity which was 3000 ten years back now reaches 37000. In addition to public higher educational institutions, the private sector has been involved in the provision of education and training. Currently about 24 percent of higher education students are enrolled in the private higher educational institutions. Private educational institutions are contributing their own share in the production of skilled manpower necessary for national development.

Higher Education Strategy Center, HESC
The government of Ethiopia, as part of its overall capacity building initiative, is in the process of implementing a Higher Education Reform Programme.

To formulate policies as well as devise strategic directions for the higher education sector, an autonomous Center, the Higher Education Strategy Center (HESC), has been established. Since the establishment of the HESC in 2003, by parliamentary legal provision (through the Higher Education Proclamation), a Board of Administrators, chaired by the Minister of Education, was appointed in 2004 to oversee and direct HESC’s strategies and overall activities. The Center was then lead by an expatriate professional who fulfilled the position of Vice Director until October 2005.
NATURE OF THE CENTER
The Higher Education Proclamation establishes HESC as “an autonomous organ having its own legal personality” (Article 86.1). This clearly means that, while it is accountable to the Ministry, it is separate from it, able to make decisions on its own account, except where Civil Service rules or the Proclamation state otherwise. This also gives HESC the right to be proactive and express its views independently without external pressure or interference.

Moreover, the HESC and its staff are committed to basic principles that will enhance the sustainability and development of the centre. These principles are public accountability, professionalism and transparent and impartial delivery of services, also in relation to other stakeholders and actors.

MANDATE OF THE CENTER
According to the Higher Education Proclamation of Ethiopia, the objective of the HESC is:

‘...Formulating vision and strategy in order to make higher education compatible with the country’s manpower needs as well as with appropriate policies and with due consideration to global situations to advise the Government on such matters’ (Paragraph 87)

In this light, the mandates of the HESC, provided by the Higher Education Proclamation are:
1. To guide the development, reform and restructuring of the Ethiopian higher education sector
2. To advise on the national higher education reform plan and strategy, and to formulate higher education development strategies that are in line with the development plans of the Government
3. To formulate strategies to enable higher education to address the development needs of the country
4. To formulate strategies that are compatible with domestic and international developments
5. To conduct studies and prepare project proposals on policies and practices in higher education

LEGAL STATUS
The Higher Education Strategy Centre is an autonomous organ with its own legal personality, accountable to the Ministry of Education through Proclamation, No 351/2003, to assist in the formulation of policy and give strategic direction to reforms in the higher education sector. This same proclamation also provided the legal basis for launching major reforms in the sector.

The Ethiopian higher education system suffers from shortcomings in aspects such as equitable access, relevance and quality, efficiency and cost effectiveness, good governance and accountability. Meeting these challenges requires concrete reforms and development through careful planning and multiple and coordinated interventions.
In this light, the HESC is designated to play a key role in the process of outlining alternative and relevant directions that assist in informed decision making towards sustainable development and reform of Ethiopia’s higher education sector.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE
The Center is currently headed and managed by a Vice Director who also serves as the Acting Director. There is an encouraging trend in delegating authority and tasks. The day to day activities of HESC are lead and directed by the Vice Director and overseen by the Board.

The HESC has a modest number of expert and administrative staff that is dedicated and committed to fulfilling its mandates and tasks, of whom the administrative staff is shared with the Higher Education Quality and Relevance Agency (HERQA). There is a strong endeavor to build the capacity of staff, mainly through cooperation with international partners and local higher education institutions.

The HESC has an office shared with the HERQA and located in the premises of the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa. The facilities of the Center are minimal but there is a constant endeavor to improve. This shows a good working relationship and sharing of resources with other system support units like HERQA and the Educational Quality Improvement Programme (EQUIP) project.

COST AND FINANCING STRUCTURE
The Center receives its annual budget from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of Ethiopia following a budget-line system and depending on the request submitted and later approved by the Ministry. Some operational and capital investments (procurement of goods, staff training and exposure visits) are covered with the support from the NUFFIC project and the World Bank Post Secondary Education Project. Some studies are also supported by the Education Pool Fund administered by the UNDP.

WORKING METHODOLOGY
HESC at this stage is lean and thin in terms of human resource, and working with a very few number of permanent staff and contracted researchers, from the public and private universities, to discharge its duties and responsibilities. The support staff is shared with the HERQA.

MAJOR TASKS UNDERTAKEN BY HESC
HESC produced:

- the HESO document, which focused on governance and leadership across the Ethiopian higher education system,
- detailed proposals for a funding formula for teaching and learning for HEIs in Ethiopia (see website),
- a detailed report of national workshop on the study and research conducted on the profiles of the thirteen new universities of Ethiopia,
- a research on the public-private HEIs partnership,
- a survey on the Student Support Services in the public HEIs.
STRATEGIC ISSUES
The strategic issues that are derived on the basis of research and analysis, input from the major internal and external stakeholders, assessment of the environment and the formulation of the HESC’s mission, vision and mandates relate to:

1. The need to reinforce and consolidate the HESC’s institutional capacity
   - To reform governance and management of the HESC
   - To reinforce human resources, facilities and infrastructure
   - To create networks: develop linkages and partnerships at local and international level

2. The need to provide policy and strategy options to relevant stakeholders in order to reform and develop Ethiopia’s higher education system
   - To improve governance and management, and reinforce human resources at higher education institutions and at the Ministry of Education
   - To develop strategies to enhance equitable access to higher education
   - To design strategies to improve quality and relevance
   - To enhance research development at higher education institutions
   - To propose cross-cutting measures addressing highly relevant social issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS and special needs in higher education

From these over-arching strategic issues of concern for the HESC will emerge the concrete strategic objectives.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION PRACTICE
HESC is communicating with the Ethiopian higher Education Institutions and other similar organisations and stakeholders through the web site and e-mail apart from the letter communications. All the major documents of the center are available on line.

For more information about HESC visit the web site:
www.higher.edu.et
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CONCLUSIONS
We also know that Ethiopia’s higher education institutions are not yet producing the volume and quality of relevant research to act as an engine for developing the economy and society. We will need to consider how the human and organisational capacity in Ethiopia’s higher education institutions might be improved so that more relevant and high quality research is produced, and even more importantly, that this research is translated into improved production and processes for the benefit of the population and the alleviation of poverty.

Ethiopia must move into the knowledge age. To this end, the possible Academic and research linkage with the rest of the world similar institutions is of paramount importance.