

PRESS RELEASE

African governments make good their pledges for advanced training in applied sciences and technology, as continental demand soars

19 March 2021 – Nairobi, Kenya: A total of seven African governments have joined the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF), the continent's nascent initiative for bolstering advanced training in the applied sciences, engineering and technology. RSIF provides full doctoral scholarships and grants for research and innovation, to boost technical and scientific capacity for the advancement and use of transformative technologies to tackle Africa's most pressing challenges. At least 40 percent of RSIF's support is reserved for women.

Launched in 2017 as the flagship initiative of the Partnership for skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET), RSIF is supported by African governments that make a minimum contribution of USD 2 million each towards the programme. Funding is expected to grow to at least USD 65 million by 2024.

In February 2021, the Government of Benin signed an agreement with the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*), the Regional Coordination Unit of RSIF, joining Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and Senegal. Further investments have been provided by the World Bank, the Government of South Korea and the European Union.

"We believe that the objectives of RSIF / PASET are aligned with our strategies for building scientific, technical and innovation capacities in priority areas such as agriculture, environment, energy, digital, infrastructure and health. In addition, the intra-African partnership and that with the other continents as provided for in this program is essential for socio-economic development in Benin and in Sub-Saharan Africa", declared Professor Eléonore YAYI LADEKAN, Minister of Higher Education and of Scientific Research of the Republic of Benin.

Since the establishment of RSIF, there has been immense and growing interest from prospective scholars and grantees, with more than 6,500 registering to its database. Having started off with 15 PhD scholarships in 2018 with contributions from the Governments of Kenya and Rwanda; 67 scholarships in 2020 with contributions from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal; and a projected 120 scholarships in 2021, RSIF is set to top 300 doctoral scholarships by 2022.

"The great interest by African scientific communities in advancing their knowledge and skills highlights the need for greater investment by African governments in local talent to boost science and innovation capabilities. We believe that Benin and the other six countries that have so far contributed, serve as an inspiration for many more governments to join this important initiative," said Dr. Segenet Kelemu, Director General and CEO, icipe.

The Fund directly contributes to the implementation of the African Union (AU) Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy (STISA) 2024, the Continental Strategy for Education in Africa (CESA) and the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"RSIF is Africa's first African-owned and managed Pan-African science fund that promotes a high-quality intra-Africa model of study for PhD training. The RSIF endowment under establishment will ensure a sustainable African platform for strengthening locally grounded knowledge production and innovation for accelerated economic

growth. Strong partnerships with the global north are making this possible,” said Prof. Aminata Sall Diallo, Executive Director of the PASET Executive Board.

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For more information: visit www.rsif-paset.org | Kindly [sign up to our newsletter](#) for RSIF news.

NOTE TO EDITORS

The **International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology** (www.icipe.org), headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, is the only research institution in Africa working primarily on insects and other arthropods. *icipe*'s mission is to ensure better food security, health and livelihoods in Africa, by producing world-class knowledge and then developing solutions that are environmentally friendly, accessible, affordable and easy-to-use by communities. These objectives are delivered through four thematic areas – human health, animal health, plant health and environmental health, resulting in a unique framework to tackle the interlinked problems of poverty, poor health, low agricultural productivity and environmental degradation in a comprehensive manner

In July 2018, *icipe* was competitively selected and appointed by the World Bank and PASET as the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) of RSIF. Its mandate includes overall coordination, planning, management and monitoring and evaluation of RSIF activities. Specifically, *icipe* is coordinating capacity strengthening of selected African universities and partnering institutions in PhD training, research, and innovation in PASET priority sectors. In addition, *icipe* facilitates the creation of partnerships with governments, universities, and national and international research organizations, for example, through sandwich training and collaboration with centres of research excellence. Furthermore, *icipe* introduces African governments and other potential strategic partners to PASET, with the aim of growing RSIF and ensuring continued continent-wide reach and support.

The **Partnership for skills in Applied Science, Engineering and Technology (PASET)** was launched in 2013 by the governments of Senegal, Ethiopia and Rwanda with facilitation by the World Bank. It aims to address systemic gaps in skills and knowledge in sub-Saharan Africa's priority ASET fields, and to build the capacity of African education and training institutions to train high-quality technicians, engineers and scientists to meet the demands of the economy. Since 2013, more than 20 African countries, as well as representatives of Brazil, China, India, Singapore and Korea have participated in PASET's various activities. PASET is currently led by the education and higher education ministries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania, along with Korea and the World Bank. The PASET governance bodies, comprising the PASET Governing Council (GC) and the PASET Executive Board (EB) provide strategic direction for implementation of the RSIF project by the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU). The GC is responsible for the overall strategic direction and vision of the RSIF, while the EB interacts with the RCU more regularly, monitoring the regular progress of activities and providing overall guidance. The PASET Consultative Advisory Group provides guidance to the GC and EB on regional priorities, goals and technical aspects of the RSIF.

The Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF) is the flagship program of PASET, an initiative by African governments to address systemic gaps in skills and knowledge necessary for long-term, sustained economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). RSIF aims to support PhD training, research and innovation in African universities that are selected as centres of excellence in fields identified by PASET as priority economic sectors for growth and development: ICTs including big data and artificial intelligence; food security and agribusiness; minerals, mining and materials engineering; energy including renewables; and climate change. A competitive grants scheme, RSIF has two components: (i) the general fund, which supports PhD training, research and innovation projects annually and (ii) the permanent or endowment fund, with proceeds going to the general fund. Students from SSA countries, primarily faculty of SSA universities lacking PhD degrees, are eligible for RSIF scholarships. RSIF builds capacity in the region to sustainably support those PhD scientists beyond their training as they go into academia, industry, or become entrepreneurs. The RSIF operates through three windows: Window 1 offers scholarships for PhD students and capacity building for RSIF African Host universities; Window 2 offers research grants and Window 3 offers innovation grants. RSIF focuses on transformative technologies that have a far-reaching positive impact on society.