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**L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI
إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين**

**Development Aid and Higher Education in Africa:
The Need for More Effective Partnerships between
African Universities and Major American Foundations**

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Since Africa's independence, improving education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels constituted a major policy goal for African governments. However, education in general and higher education in particular continues to face many crises that affect the quality of teaching and research in universities and other institutions throughout the continent. Given the series of crises especially from the 1980s onward, there was a tendency among international donors in particular such as the World Bank to put higher education on the backburner in order to focus more on basic education. The rationale for such a shift was that higher education was a luxury for Africa and that African countries would benefit more by investing on the lower levels of the educational spectrum, but it did not take too long before the same international agencies began to realize that higher education should remain a high priority in Africa's development agenda. As a result of the high costs associated with higher education and the inability of African governments to respond to the multiple challenges associated with it, it is fair to say that higher education has received considerable attention in aid initiatives to Africa.

The proposed paper focuses on the various partnerships between major U.S. foundations and universities and higher education institutions in Africa and the millions of dollars spent over the last ten years in efforts to support the development of higher education and improve its quality. The paper is premised on the argument that initiatives for improving the quality of higher education in Africa, whether internal or donor-driven, should be based on more integrated and holistic plans rather than on isolated short-term projects for immediate solutions. In addition, such interventions should not lose track of the fact that, as a result of the process of self-criticism and re-organization that occurred within the African continent in the 1990s on, major internal developments occurred from within that sought to bring solutions to the many challenges universities and higher education institutions were confronted with. The paper analyses some of the accomplishments that were possible as a result of partnerships between U.S. foundations and African universities. It also examines the extent to which these foundations were able to build on African universities' capacities and strengths, their interests and needs. Through an examination of the lessons learned through these partnerships, the study proposes better ways of engaging African universities in order to make these partnerships much more effective.