

OVERVIEW OF THE USAID WA-WASH GRADUATE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary goal of the USAID West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (USAID WA-WASH) Program is to increase sustainable access to safe water and sanitation and improve hygiene in West Africa. To contribute to the achievement of this goal, the program strengthens the regional enabling environment and capacity for WASH to achieve the WASH MDGs in West Africa. The Program capacity building efforts include the graduate student scholarship program, training programs, workshops, conferences, and internship programs at the regional office and with the Program implementing partners. This summary presents the overview of the USAID WA-WASH graduate student scholarship program. The goal of the USAID WA-WASH scholarship component is to provide funding to graduate students from the USAID WA-WASH intervention countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Niger) at the Master level in local universities and to conduct research that contributes to USAID WA-WASH program objectives.

At the beginning of the Program, a study was conducted to assess the human resources needs to provide water supply and sanitation services to meet the Millennium Development Goals in each of the three countries. Specifically, the studies identified the available capacities at the local and country level and the capacity gaps at local and country level to be addressed in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and full coverage in the delivery of WASH services. The study findings showed a high deficit in numbers and/or mismatch of staff and competences on various levels and in various WASH fields. Therefore, the USAID WA-WASH graduate student scholarship program aims to contribute to increase the number of people with the needed WASH competencies in the three intervention countries.

The Program funded 60 students to study in 6 academic institutions during the academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. These institutions include: (1) International Institute of Water and Environment Engineering (2iE) in Burkina Faso; (2) University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso; (3) Aube Nouvelle University in Burkina Faso; (4) University for Development Studies in Ghana; (5) Abdou Moumouni Dioffo University of Niamey in Niger; and (6) AGRHYMET Regional Center in Niger. The 6 institutions were selected based on their existing partnerships with the USAID WA-WASH program. For example, some of the institutions were already involved in the USAID WA-WASH training of their faculty for the enhancement of their WASH curriculum.

The USAID WA-WASH Program made a call for scholarship applications in collaboration with the six academic institutions and expressed a preference for applicants with experience that significantly contributes to the knowledge related to USAID WA-WASH Program thematic areas. Further, the USAID WA-WASH Program encouraged applications from female candidates. Above all, the applicants were required to have outstanding academic performance, be citizens of Burkina, Ghana or Niger, and have good command of the language of training of the academic institution they apply to. Applicants were required to electronically submit, to the respective host university, their application documents including the most recent diploma, transcripts showing their grades, and three recommendation letters from the professors. The applicants were also required to submit a two-page research proposal covering a subject that is in line with the USAID WA-WASH Program thematic areas. Following the call for applications, a total of 70 and 84 applications were received for the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic years, respectively.

The applications received were for studies on water quality, water resources management, sanitation, hygiene, climate change, food security, gender studies, geography, and project management. The academic institutions conducted an initial screening of the applicants and the shortlist was submitted to the USAID WA-WASH Program scholarship committee for final review and approval. The criteria used to assess the applications required applicants

to have at least 14/20 grade or at least an average grade of B in their previous graduate courses. To ensure gender balance among the scholarship recipients, preference was given to female over male candidates given the same ranking so as to have at least two female students per institution.

Sixty students including 25 females and 35 males were selected for one-year scholarships which covered school fees, housing, health insurance, and monthly stipend. In addition, the Program provided funding for the research undertaken by the students in the course of their studies. The funded students report to the USAID WA- WASH on their courses and research progress on a monthly basis.

The students are encouraged to make presentations about their research work as part of the Learn and Share seminar series at the regional office. The presentations give the students the opportunity to interact with USAID WA-WASH staff and other students, discuss the successes and challenges they encountered, and brainstorm the next steps for their research. In addition to their thesis, at the end of the scholarship period, students are required to write a final report about their research and how it contributes to USAID WA-WASH Program goals and objectives. This report is submitted in hardcopy and electronic forms to the USAID WA-WASH Program, regional implementing partner organizations and the students' host institutions.

This is an executive summary of a report dated July 2013. The full report is available (in English) upon request via our website. For more details about our program activities and other reports please visit <http://wawash.fiu.edu/>

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