African Virtual University (AVU)

More than 50 percent of Africa’s 700 million people are under 20 years old.

It is no surprise, then, that demand for college-level education is so enormous that many high school graduates are unable to find places in local universities.

Taking advantage of the latest technology, the World Bank helped set up the African Virtual University (AVU), an interactive-instructional telecommunications network established to serve the countries of Africa. The AVU uses the power of modern telecommunications technology to provide worldclass quality education and training programs to students and professionals in Africa.

Originally started as a World Bank project, the AVU has been transformed into an independent inter-governmental organization based in Nairobi, Kenya, with 34 learning centers in 17 African countries. The World Bank continues to be its largest backer, with commitments of $13 million over three years.

So far, the AVU has created a network of partner institutions in Francophone, Anglophone, and Lusophone African countries with learning centers hosted mainly in public universities. It launched an accredited degree and diploma in computer science, which is delivered to students at African universities through satellite broadcasting and the Internet. The AVU delivered more than 3,000 hours of instructional programs, sourced from leading universities in North America, Europe, Australia, and Africa. More than 23,000 students are registered in its semester-long courses, and close to 2,500 professionals are enrolled in executive business seminars. Its pre-university courses have attracted more than 40 percent of women at the most active learning centers. The AVU has also provided 1,000 PCs to learning centers, set up a network of 45,000 e-mail accounts and created a digital library holding more than 1,000 journals.

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