Ivey Business School
Empowering African Business Schools: The 39 Country Initiative

Introduction
The Ivey Business School at Western University initiated the 39 Country Initiative in 2010. The 39 Country Initiative looks to assist poverty reduction efforts by improving the quality of business education in the world’s 39 least developed countries, of which 32 are in Africa. This case story discusses the school’s efforts in (a) developing the capabilities of university students in the world’s poorest countries, (b) allowing its own students to learn from and contribute to the learning of their counterparts in those countries, and (c) making educational materials available—including books, articles, cases, and teaching notes—to assist in the development of capable and responsible future managers and leaders.

Challenges
Economic growth leads to the expansion of businesses, thereby calling for relevant managerial skills. A prime group that assists with developing such expertise is business schools. However, most African business schools are yet able to properly play such a role, with limited access to teaching materials, outdated facilities, or enough qualified instructors. The implications of such limited capacity will become even more pressing with the continent’s increasing integration into the dynamic and complex global economy.

To this end, a three-pronged strategy was formulated to help business schools in those countries play more active roles in producing well trained and responsible management professionals able to work in the increasingly complex business environment. The 39 Country Initiative addresses three critical challenges: (a) the lack of current teaching material, (b) the insufficient quantity of books and other reference materials available, and (3) the limited numbers and qualifications of faculty at business schools in the target countries.

Actions taken and Results
In regards to the lack of current teaching material, considerable progress has already been made. Ivey Publishing, the second largest producer and distributor of case studies, allows faculty in the eligible countries free access to its cases, technical notes, and articles, comprising nearly 50,000 pages of proprietary content. To date, over 1,150 professors and their students from the 32 eligible African countries have registered for this opportunity. Not only does this access allow the faculty at hundreds of African universities to draw on a huge collection of high quality current material, it also opens up the opportunity for them to apply the case-based teaching method, which has proved relevant and suitable for business education.

Partnering with business schools in Africa, Ivey also developed a course in which its senior undergraduate and MBA students visit with select business schools in Africa to teach short, introductory case-based courses and develop understanding of the African business environment. In addition, professor-to-professor case teaching workshops have been offered at various African business schools.
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to illustrate the proper uses of cases. Through these efforts, Ivey has demonstrated its commitment to empowering business schools in Africa and their faculty members.

Cognizant of the acute shortages of current, hard-copy teaching materials, Ivey has also embarked on an effort to collect books, journals, cases, course packs, and readings and ship them to business schools in the 39 countries. To this end, many Ivey faculty, students and the book store at Western University in London, Ontario have agreed to donate their surplus and used books. As a result, a huge collection of content has been received and preparations are underway to make an initial container shipment to Addis Ababa University, School of Commerce. Similar efforts are afoot to encourage business schools at other universities in North America and Western Europe to collect teaching materials for separate universities in Africa.

While all of these activities require effort, time, and cost on the part of Ivey, the initiative allows Ivey the opportunity to live its vision of being an agent of positive change. It also affords Ivey the opportunity to make truly meaningful contributions by assisting in preparing future African managers and leaders for the challenges and opportunities ahead. More importantly, it enables African business schools to play active roles in building their respective economies by producing well-trained and responsible management professionals who contribute to their society by balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities.