The African Copyright & Access to Knowledge (ACA2K) Project probed the relationship in African countries between national copyright environments and access to hard-copy and digital learning materials. The project probed this relationship within an access to knowledge (A2K) framework – a framework that regards the protection and promotion of user access as central objectives of copyright law.

This project, supported by Canada’s IDRC and South Africa’s Shuttleworth Foundation, and managed by the Wits University LINK Centre in Johannesburg, ran from 2007 to 2011.

In late 2007, legal researchers in five African countries (Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda) prepared “environmental scans” of the copyright contexts in their countries.

In January 2008, the ACA2K Methodology Workshop was held at the Wits LINK Centre, Johannesburg, at which researchers from eight ACA2K study countries (the ACA2K network’s country nodes) were present:

- Egypt
- Ghana
- Kenya
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Senegal
- South Africa
- Uganda

Participants at the Methodology Workshop developed the ACA2K Methodology Guide for deployment by country node researchers.

Participants at the Methodology Workshop were also given training in the Outcome Mapping (OM) method of project intentional design and monitoring -- the method utilised to monitor the progress of the research network and the network’s interactions with policymaking processes.
and stakeholders.

Based on the environmental scans and the Methodology Guide, the project pursued two main components:

1. Research Component
2. Dissemination & Policy Engagement Component

The primary activities of the Research Component (mid-2008 to mid-2009) were:

- Data collection (descriptive doctrinal study and qualitative impact assessment interviews) in the ACA2K country node countries, based on the Methodology Guide;
- Writing up of Country Reviews and country Executive Policy Briefs, based on a fusion of the doctrinal and interview data; and
- A Comparative Review, drawing comparison, contrasts and lessons from the findings across all of the study countries.

The primary activities of the Dissemination & Policy Dialogue Component (mid-2009 to mid-2011) were:

- Distribution of project findings and document outputs via the project website, via national, regional and international fora;
- Convening of National Policy Dialogue Seminars in each of the study countries, at which project findings and policy recommendations are presented directly to relevant stakeholders; and

The general objective of the ACA2K project was to empower researchers in the study countries (nodes) to develop the evidence necessary for stakeholders in their countries to pursue development of copyright policy environments that maximise the opportunities for access to digital and hard-copy learning materials.
More specific objectives included:

- Building research capacity in African nations, and building an Africa-wide network of researchers, around issues of copyright and learning materials access;
- Building the corpus of publications – both research reports and academic peer-reviewed publications – on copyright and learning materials access in Africa;
- Building awareness and policy advocacy capability among learning materials stakeholders in African countries around the importance of copyright issues – including copyright flexibilities -- for both digital and hard-copy learning materials provision; and
- Building awareness and policy advocacy capability among copyright policy stakeholders (e.g., government officials, legislators, advisors, learning communities, civil society groupings) of the importance of copyright -- and the importance of copyright flexibilities in national policy/law/regulation -- for learning materials access, both digital and hard-copy.

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