

GUYANA

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth and regular donor to the COL budget, Guyana is committed to developing open and distance learning (ODL) and attends the meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers.

SUMMARY

In the 2003-2006 period, Guyana has made significant progress in strategic planning and implementation of ODL at national level. The Guyanese Association for Distance and Open Learning (GADOL) was created in this period. Guyana has also signed up to the Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

Working in partnership to develop a national strategy

COL worked with Guyana to develop a national strategy for ODL. A National Forum was held on 14 February 2005 at the National Centre for Educational Resource Development where 50 educators, representatives from the defence force and other national departments were present. Following the event the Guyanese Association for Distance and Open Learning (GADOL) was created and Chief Education Officer Ed Caesar was elected the President. GADOL has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Education Guyana and COL to draw up a policy document for the use of ODL and, subsequently, a national implementation plan for ODL initiatives/actions. It has been agreed that this plan would be attached to the policy document when it is submitted for government approval.

Working with regional partners

Guyana took part in the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers (CEOs) organised by COL. These meetings provide a useful opportunity for exchange of experience and best practice.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Guyana is an active participant in the VUSSC (see section on Pan-Commonwealth initiatives for more details of VUSSC).

Working with international partners to use ODL for development

COL hosted a high level institute in Vancouver in May 2005, to explore the relationship between ODL and development. The Institute was attended by 30 participants including one from Guyana. The Institute provided an excellent opportunity for the participants to dialogue across the boundaries of disciplines and functions. The dialogue was facilitated and structured to maximise participation and to ensure the outcome of producing a publication that would address the relationship between ODL and development.

Media Empowerment for health issues

COL worked with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) to reach both coastal and remote communities with health information with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention. GRPA provides laboratory services to complement the clinical services (testing for HIV, random blood sugar, pap smear, etc). GRPA facilitates programmes for health professionals who function at maternal and child health clinics. They also have a Youth Services Centre in Georgetown where peer health and awareness sessions are undertaken. The activity with the GRPA established a health media unit to enhance the organisation's reach across the country.

Preparation and use of learning materials

COL supported the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE) of the University of Guyana and the Regional Programme on Animal Health Assistants to develop, deliver and monitor a Certificate programme on "Broiler Production Technology". IDCE completed the course materials, study guide and tutors' manual and a course for small poultry farmers was piloted.

Improving teacher training through ODL

Guyana's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was presented to the World Bank/IMF Boards on 17 September 2002 and a subsequent annual progress report was submitted in August 2004.

In the PRSP, ODL is included as a measure for teacher training. In the section related to teacher training, in the Education chapter, the PRSP states: "There will also be a conscious effort to reverse the growth in percentage of untrained teachers. For this reason, the Government will implement measures to reduce

student/trained teacher ratio from about 40:1 to 27:1 at primary and secondary schools. These measures will include (i) a review of the University of Guyana Diploma of Education Programme to facilitate growth in the number of graduate trained teachers; and (ii) the expansion of distance education training centres to cover the 10 administrative regions.”

In the annual progress report on PRSP which was submitted to the World Bank/IMF in August 2004, the section on Teacher Training under Chapter Three says: “In 2003, about 103 hinterland teachers completed the Foundation programme under the Guyana Basic Education Teacher Training (GBET) programme, which incorporates distance education methods. They are now eligible to do professional training leading to the award of the Teacher Certificate.” Chapter Six of the same report titled Poverty Reduction Programme for 2004-2005 states: “Learning centres will be established to facilitate training of teachers using distance education methods.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Under COL’s Young Professionals Attachment Programme Guyana hosted interns at the Commonwealth Youth Programme’s Caribbean Regional Office.

LOOKING FORWARD

Strategic planning and the implementation of an ODL framework with a special focus on teacher training in Guyana will continue to be important in its partnership with COL in the next planning period of 2006-2009. Guyana’s participation in VUSSC will also be a significant element in the next triennium as this initiative is expanded.