

JAMAICA

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

One of the larger small states of the Commonwealth and part of the Caribbean grouping of countries, Jamaica is a regular contributor to COL's budget. It has also supported COL's work by hosting international events on the theme of open and distance learning (ODL).

SUMMARY

Jamaica has participated in a range of activities in partnership with COL in the period 2003-2006. It is an active participant in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and has attended a range of international events including the meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers (CEOs). The 4th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) is being held in Jamaica in November 2006.

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

Facilitating International exchanges and debate

PCF4 will be held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October - 3 November 2006. The five day event will address open and distance learning through widening educational access, bridging the digital divide and advancing the social and economic development of communities and nations at large. There will be a special focus on applications in developing countries and special attention will be paid to the opportunities presented by the combination of increasing connectivity and open educational resources. Sir John Daniel, President of COL, and Professor Stewart Marshall, Director of UWIDEC, will co-chair the Conference.

The 3rd Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF3) was held in partnership with the Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ) in Dunedin, New Zealand from 4-8 July 2004. COL provided support to three delegates from Jamaica to participate in PCF3.

Achieving Development Goals through ODL

COL hosted a high level institute in Vancouver in May 2005, to explore the relationship between ODL and development. One participant from Jamaica attended. 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.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Jamaica has signed up to take part in the creation of the VUSSC. COL will work in close cooperation and consultation with participating countries, institutions and agencies to establish VUSSC (for more details of VUSSC see section on Pan-Commonwealth initiatives).

Working with regional partners

Jamaica is one of the 12 member countries of the Caribbean which participates in the annual meetings for Caribbean Chief Education Officers (CEOs). The meetings serve as a forum for COL to receive advice and guidance from CEOs and also provide opportunities for exchange of experience and best practice among the CEOs. In July 2004, the Chief Education Officer of Jamaica participated in the CEOs Meeting on ODL and the meeting for small states which were both held in Dunedin during PCF3.

Working in Partnership to Strengthen National Systems

COL is working with Mico College in Kingston to transform it to a dual-mode institution with a view to establishing the Mico Institute for Distance Education.

Media Empowerment to Achieve Better prosperity for Farmers

COL led a capacity building exercise with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) in the Ministry of Agriculture to enable their media unit to provide quality training for farmers throughout the country.

COL ran media workshops for extension officers across Jamaica and implemented media units to cover the western and central regions of the country (Kingston, Montego Bay and Mandeville). Forty extension workers were trained in the process of audio and video production. The video productions (in agriculture and land administration, pepper production, fertiliser, crop diversification, new technologies, pest control) are now used to facilitate extension services efforts to aid farmers in crop diversification.

The agricultural authorities in Jamaica are very pleased with the impact of the media empowerment programme for agricultural officers. This enables them to have a more widespread influence on farming practice and may even be influencing more young people to stay on the land.

Improving Teacher Training

The Technical Teacher Training Programme, developed by COL through regional collaboration, is made available for Technical/vocational education and training (TVET) teachers in selected countries in the Caribbean. The programme, which is to train TVET instructors in pedagogical skills to complement their TVET knowledge, is being offered on a pilot basis as a Special Diploma by the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTECH) and may allow articulation into UTECH's Bachelor of Education degree programme

Strategic planning

Jamaica contributed to planning COL's forward strategy by hosting a regional consultative meeting for COL's Three Year Plan in November 2004. Eighteen participants were present at the discussion.

Preparation and use of learning materials

A three day meeting of the authors of the proposed book on "Foreign Tertiary Education Providers in the Anglophone Caribbean" was held in Trinidad & Tobago in October 2005. Fifteen participants came from countries across the Caribbean including Jamaica and also from Canada. The book will be released during PCF4 and will be available in hard copy, eBook, CD ROM, PDF and on COL and UNESCO websites.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the 2nd phase of the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, nine students from Jamaica successfully completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education offered by the Indira Gandhi National Open University. The nine students are now working towards the Masters of Arts Distance Education.

Under COL's Young Professional Attachment Programme, Jamaica hosted an intern at the University of the West Indies as part of their placement with the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Caribbean Regional Office.

LOOKING FORWARD

Jamaica took part in a range of valuable activities in 2003-2006 many of which will be carried through to the next planning period 2006-2009. Its commitment to VUSSC will continue to be important as the initiative is rolled out. Improving teacher training and achieving better prosperity for farmers will continue to be a focus of Jamaica's work with COL in 2006-2009.